

A "HARD UNWINKING ANGRY POINT OF LIGHT" AND
"THE FLUCTUATION OF STARLIGHT":
FEMALE IDENTITY IN THE SHORT FICTION OF
KATHERINE ANNE PORTER AND EUDORA WELTY

By

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This dissertation is dedicated to three men and three relationships which are crucial to my own sense of self. First, I dedicate this work to my new son Nathanael. Since I dedicated my master's thesis to my daughter Kelsey, it seemed appropriate that I should dedicate this second and final endeavor to my second and final child. Secondly, this dissertation is dedicated to my husband Jim, who was (and will always be) an active father to our children while I completed this degree and who gave me encouragement, love, and, just as valuably, time while I wrote this paper. His willingness to let me try out ideas on him, to talk through sticking points, and to sympathize with my moods is a debt I can never repay. Finally, and most importantly, I dedicate this dissertation to Jesus Christ, for in him I live and move and have my being. The process of writing this dissertation has taught me that Christ is the author and the finisher of far more than my faith (Hebrews 12:2).

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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Both Katherine Anne Porter and Eudora Welty give attention in their fiction to the question of female identity, yet their conceptions of it differ dramatically. Constancy and singularity, a "hard unwinking angry point of light," characterize the "core" sense of identity Porter's characters display or desire, their urge toward a unified and static self. "Fluctuation of starlight," in its image of changing constellations, better expresses the difficulty to define multiplicity of identity in Welty's characters, their willingness to constantly add to and otherwise change their identities. Porter's definition and Welty's (non)definition radically determine the degree and quality of their female protagonists' subjectivity, voice, objectification, and relationality. Insistence upon internal integration causes Porter's characters to limit

their subjectivity, conforming instead to ordered roles or choosing passivity, both of which can provide stability and predictability, though often at the expense of independence and voice. Not surprisingly, such conventionality often facilitates their objectification, a position from which most of her female characters are unwilling or unable to escape. Predictably, then, relationships are for Porter's women often flawed or failed, enabling neither mutual enrichment nor the unity and integration the characters hope to gain through connection. Porter's vision, however, is by no means entirely dismal; for in the last Miranda story she allows Miranda heightened subjectivity, independent voice, and positive relationality which her other female protagonists achieve only imperfectly if at all. By contrast, the plural sense of identity that Welty's female characters possess allows change, an expansive and unrestricted sense of self, and a fluidity which resists boundaries and definitions, providing her women the freedom to enunciate their subjectivity through rejecting convention, acting autonomously, and exercising a strong sense of voice. Because of their willfulness and personal strength, Welty's women are rarely objectified, but instead open themselves to otherness, which adds variety to their relationships. Welty demonstrates through her female protagonists that subjectivity and voice can survive and grow within relationship, allowing women a full range of possibility.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of Katherine Anne Porter's "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," her heroine Miranda has a vision as she draws near to death of a "hard unwinking angry point of light" which she recognizes as her still-surviving identity, a single, concentrated "fiercely burning particle of being that knew itself alone, that relied upon nothing beyond itself for its strength." This image, which also appears in "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" and "Holiday," is the finest and most graphic representation of Porter's concept of identity. As I will argue, Porter conceives of identity as a core of being, a sort of essential self which, alone, strives for integration, wholeness, and order. The singularity of this identity--its need for cohesion and consistency and its self-sufficiency--is suggested by the solitary point of the light within, while its hardness and unwinking quality indicate the solidity and stability of that identity as well as its resistance to change.

Porter does not suggest that there is a single, essential identity that all women as women share, nor does she always identify a specific focus of her female characters' identities, other than the need for order and integration itself. In "He," for example, Mrs. Whipple's

core identity is shown to be centered around her maternity, yet in "Flowering Judas" no particular focus for Laura's identity is explicitly given. Without exception, however, every one of Porter's female protagonists is driven by a need for order and integration, a need to unify the fragmented aspects of her life, to shape a stable, singular, and coherent sense of self that resists change and rejects all experience, relationship, and possibility which threaten to disrupt identity's continuity and integration: this drive forms and is itself the core identity of each of Porter's female protagonists.

By contrast, the "fluctuation of starlight," a phrase from the novel Delta Wedding, suggests Eudora Welty's quite different conception of identity as multiplicitous: infinitely variable, uncontained and wide-ranging, and separate yet connected in constellations, as is starlight. Welty's conception allows a fullness and variety to identity that will even admit seeming contradictions--the coexistence of "incompatibilities" such as individuality and relationality, or self with other.

Several critics have recognized and praised the multiplicity apparent in Welty's fiction in general and in the identities of her women in particular. One of the greatest pleasures that Robert Penn Warren received from Welty's first collection of short stories was, he said, the great variety it contained. Warren imagines Welty's

attitude in writing these stories as that of a person who is "delighted not only with the variety of the world but with the variety of ways in which one could look at the world and the variety of things which stories could be and still be stories" (246-47). Later in the same article, Warren describes as most successful those stories in which the natural world is depicted as layered, "one picture superimposed upon another, different and yet somehow the same" (257). This seems close to Daniele Pitavy-Souques' recognition of an other, not wholly-retrievable world which exists beneath the familiar in Welty's fiction ("Blazing Butterfly" 552).

It is my contention that these layers, this multiplicity of being, is most fully expressed in the identities of Welty's female protagonists. Elaine Pugh also sees this plurality as centered in female consciousness, and describes women's ability in Welty's fiction to allow the coexistence of opposites within themselves (437). Patricia Yaeger, quoting Mary Jacobus, suggests that Welty explores difference not as opposition but as multiplicity through her female characters and through her texts themselves.

"Difference is redefined, not as male versus female--not as biologically constituted--but as a multiplicity, joyousness and heterogeneity which is that of textuality itself" ("Dialogic Imagination" 585). Andrea Goudie suggests in her analysis of Welty's "Circe" that multiplicity is a capacity

given only to humans. Welty presents the goddess Circe as possessing knowledge which is "expansive but unexpandable" (485) and as being supernatural and powerful but incapable of understanding the "multi-faceted affections" of humans she encounters (483).

At least one critic is bothered by the plurality which Welty's women are able to contain, the ease with which they expand their identities through absorbing aspects of the world around them, and their rejection of a necessarily unified self. Revealing perhaps more about his own identity needs than those of Virgie, Richard C. Moreland notes that it is a "predicament" for Virgie that she doesn't receive a "unifying vision" in a single moment at the close of "The Wanderers" but "only" fragments of revelation (92).

Not all of Welty's female protagonists participate in this multiplicity; nearly all of those who do not, however, nevertheless are drawn to multiplicity's expansive possibilities. Similarly, those who are portrayed as being dissatisfied with themselves, or unfulfilled in their "selves," experience such dissatisfaction or lack of fulfillment because they refuse or otherwise are unable to accept the full range of identity available to them. This is the case both with Ellie Morgan of "The Key" and Cassie Morrison of The Golden Apples. Because of the many different forms it takes, its variant expressions in individual identities, multiplicity resists the clear

definition that is central to Porter's conception of identity. While Welty's female characters celebrate their faceted and mutable identities, feeling that there is no need to deny one identity, as Welty says, in order to adopt another (Van Noppen 9), Porter's strive toward knowability and stability.

This knowability and stability may be derived from and invested in a phallogocentric culture and mindset which insist on a "oneness" of identity, a singularity of form.

Toril Moi identifies the need for a unified self as an element of "traditional bourgeois humanism" (6) which stems from patriarchal ideology. Central to this ideology, Moi argues, is a "seamlessly unified self--either individual or collective--which is commonly called 'Man.' . . . Gloriously autonomous, it banishes from itself all conflict, contradiction, and ambiguity" (8). Michael Foucault has noted that this conception of "Man" as an "autonomous, unified, and coherent individual" is only a two hundred-year-old idea (Gardiner 115), yet despite its relative newness, it is a pervasive part, according to Moi, of Western male thought (7). Judith Kegan Gardiner suggests that women "may feel that the old unified subject was never a female subject" (115), yet Porter seems an exception. She seems in her fiction not to dismantle this concept as an inappropriate description of female identity, but rather to

uphold it and to show that women are equally driven by a need for unity, singularity, and coherence of self.

Moi discusses several feminist critics who she believes also "buy into" this model of identity. She scrutinizes most closely the critical practice of Elaine Showalter, who she believes is interested in encouraging the development of women "as whole and harmonious human beings under patriarchy" (6). In Moi's opinion, Showalter is bothered by the "multiplicity of perspectives" and the "shifts and changes of subject positions" in Virginia Woolf's works, particularly in A Room of One's Own (2), and her refusal to be limited to "one unifying angle of vision" (3). According to Moi, Showalter's investment in bourgeois humanism is also responsible for her criticism of Doris Lessing's works. Showalter sees both Woolf and Lessing, in Moi's opinion, as "reject[ing] the fundamental need for the individual to adopt a unified, integrated self-identity" (7). Moi suggests that Showalter shares Georg Lukacs' critical position. (Showalter, Moi notes, quotes Lukacs in A Literature of Their Own.) Lukacs too believed that literature should portray "'man and society as complete entities'" and that anything that divides "'the complete human person'" leads to "'mutilation of the essence of man'" (qtd. in Moi 5).

Other feminist critics whom Moi cites as expressing the same patriarchal insistence on a unified, integrated self

are Patricia Stubbs, Marcia Holly, and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. Stubbs, Moi points out, criticizes American novels written between 1880 and 1920 for having no "totalizing representation of both the private and the working life of women" (5--emphasis mine). Marcia Holly, in her desire for a "'noncontradictory perception of the world'" (qtd. in Moi 10--emphasis mine), also seems to Moi to share Stubbs' and Showalter's conception of identity. Moi also believes that Gilbert and Gubar, in The Madwoman in the Attic, work toward "a lost 'female' unity," citing as evidence their concluding hope that "'if we can piece together their [individual women writers'] fragments the parts will form a whole that tells the story of a . . . 'mother of us all'" (qtd. in Moi 67).

Interestingly, New Criticism, in its effort to find a unified whole through the analysis of literature--a result, Moi claims, of the "patriarchal aesthetic values" which permeate the approach (67)--also valorizes unity, wholeness, and integration. Porter's works, not coincidentally, have long been hailed as receptive to New Critical strategies and as being exemplary of formalist values.

This notion of a unified self has its origin in the singularity of the phallus, a "whole, unitary and simple form, as opposed to the terrifying chaos of the female genitals" (Moi 67). The psychoanalysis which Freud developed reiterates, of course, this same "opposition,"

positing male anatomy, sexuality, and identity makeup as ideal standards. Though Moi sees psychoanalysis as recognizing that there are multiple parts to the self and as emphasizing conflicting drives and the often oppositional struggling of the conscious and unconscious (9), I am more in agreement with Annette Kolodny's view of psychoanalysis as having an "'internal consistency as a system'" (qtd. in Moi 74). Gardiner also notes that psychoanalysis assumes that minds are unchanging, that psychoanalytic laws are "permanent and timeless" (120). Both critics' comments point out that psychoanalysis is rooted in a belief that the mind is essential and ahistorical, that one mind (or "case") can be representative of all others, and that the aim of psychoanalysis is to produce (or re-produce) an unfragmented self.

For though it is true that Freud "split" the mind into parts--the id, ego, and superego--it is equally true that he stressed the continual effort of the ego to unify the whole person. "In relation to identity," Norman Holland writes, "the most important thing the ego does is unify. 'The ego is an organization characterized by a very remarkable trend towards unification, toward synthesis,' said Freud, and Hermann Nunberg summed up this unifying force in his classic phrase, 'the synthetic function of the ego'" (343). The ego's function, Holland goes on to say, is to bring together

forces that may not seem ideal to an outsider but is the "best possible balance" for an individual identity (344).

Other psychoanalysts have elaborated on what they see as identity's basic drive towards unity and immutability. Erik Erikson, for example, believed that though identity grows over a lifetime, it "consolidates" in adolescence (Gardiner 126). Even in its lifetime of growth, however, identity, to Erikson, demonstrates continuity and predictability (Holland 349). In fact, Erikson defined identity (as Holland words it) as an "inner sense of continuity and coherence" (349). Similarly, Heinz Hartman believed that there is a consistent pattern of identity even when behavior is mutable and unpredictable (Holland 349). Holland himself, with his theory of identity as a "theme and variations," borrowed from Donald Winnicott and Heinz Lichtenstein, seems convinced of the essential immutability of identity, though he allows for "variations" of this core self. As Gardiner points out, Holland's conception of identity also stresses unification (127).

Porter seems not to challenge the applicability of this unified conception of self for female identity; rather, she appropriated it both for herself (as will be shown in the conclusion) and for her female protagonists, showing them all as striving toward a singular, non-contradictory sense of self.

Welty's theory of identity, by contrast, has a counterpart in some of the more recent French feminist thinking, particularly in Helene Cixous' and Luce Irigaray's theories of feminine identity. These critics seek to fragment the unified self upon which Porter's characters rely so heavily. Irigaray, in This Sex Which Is Not One, writes,

Thus a woman's (re)discovery of herself can only signify the possibility of not sacrificing any of her pleasures to another, of not identifying with anyone in particular, of never being simply one. It is a sort of universe in expansion for which no limits could be fixed and which, for all that, would not be incoherency.'

Women, Irigaray claims, achieve a fullness of identity for themselves when they refuse boundaries to their "selves," when they cease believing that the inclusion of disparate elements and experiences in their identities will result in chaos and Babel. In the (re) of the discovery Irigaray writes of can be found the key to this multiplicity: woman continually changes, adds to herself identities and identifications, yet never discovers "herself" finally or always rediscovers what has already been discovered. For the process of discovery, of internally knowing, also continues, shifts, changes. Cixous refers to this all-inclusiveness as a sort of "bisexuality," denoting not necessarily a sexual preference, but a refusal to limit oneself to culturally-defined roles and expectations for a single sex, for example. This capacity

"doesn't annul differences but stirs them up, pursues them, increases their number" (NFF 254).

While this ability is not limited to women, Cixous suggests that it is less difficult for them; men, Cixous states, more often insist on singularity and uniformity of being. This is borne out in Welty's short fiction: women more often than men participate in multiplicity, yet some male figures also have access to multiplicity's potential. Loch Morrison is perhaps the most developed of these men, though King MacLain and his sons, and even Fate Rainey, are shown to possess a certain expansiveness of identity. Even so, rarely are men in Welty's fiction given the full range of identity her women are allowed. King MacLain's mythology is comically deconstructed, reducing him from heroic stature and omnipotence and exposing the phallus(y) of his masculinity. He and his sons instead become examples of a "ruined Southern patriarchy," controlled by their wives (Westling, Welty 147). Carol Manning does not deny the mythic qualities of Welty's men, yet argues that the mythology often results in a corporate identity, with father and son legends intertwined. With this structure, the individual becomes a group and the "mythic concept" is all that exists, not the person (Morning Glories 127). Likewise, although Loch is credited with a spaciousness of identity, he is given no authority or power as concomitant to that identity. By contrast, both the men and the women

of Porter's short fiction, with few exceptions, determinedly attempt to maintain a singular self, a unified and integrated identity: perhaps Granny Weatherall is one of the best exemplars of this type.

Such all-inclusiveness as Welty's admits elements to the self which may appear incompatible or contradictory. Irigaray argues, however, that these elements are only truly contradictory if they are defined using conventional, masculine logic. "'She' is infinitely other in herself. That is undoubtedly the reason she is called temperamental, incomprehensible, perturbed, capricious . . . Contradictory words seem a little crazy to the logic of reason, and inaudible for him who listens with ready-made grids, a code prepared in advance" (NFF 103).

Cixous also celebrates woman's capacity for multiplicity and argues against a necessary "wholeness" to identity.

If she is a whole, it's a whole composed of parts that are wholes, not simple partial objects but a moving, limitlessly changing ensemble, a cosmos tirelessly traversed . . . an immense astral space not organized around any one sun that's any more of a star than the others (NFF 259).

It is not surprising that Cixous uses here the same star imagery which Welty uses recurrently in her texts, perhaps most apparently in "Moon Lake," where she embodies plural identity as a "beast in gossamer," the star-flecked night sky. Another, similar image used in the same text, however, points out an important difference between Cixous'

use of star imagery and Welty's: Welty's "stars" come "down to earth" in the form of fireflies, winking off and on. Whereas Cixous represents woman's multiplicity as cosmic and as a somewhat steady state, Welty's firefly image illustrates that her version is more local, concrete, and fluctuating. Yet through the image and, more directly, through multiplicity itself, Welty's female protagonists can find "not [their] sum but [their] differences" (NFF 264).

At another point in the same text, her intriguing and suggestive "The Laugh of the Medusa," Cixous uses different imagery to describe her vision of multiplicity, and again, it is imagery which Welty uses extensively in association with female identity.

But look, our seas are what we make of them, full of fish or not, opaque or transparent, red or black, high or smooth, narrow or bankless; and we are ourselves sea, sand, coral, seaweed, beaches, tides, swimmers, children, waves . . . More or less wavyly sea, earth, sky--what matter would rebuff us? We know how to speak them all. (NFF 260)

Transparency is used to describe Virgie Rainey's openness towards the end of "The Wanderers," and sea or water is one of Welty's most frequent images of female fullness and expansiveness, as "The Winds" and "Moon Lake" illustrate. In short, a woman in Welty's fiction, as Cixous phrases it, "doesn't defend herself against these unknown women whom she's surprised at becoming, but derives pleasure from this gift of alterability" (NFF 260). She is

the woman arriving over and over again [who] does not stand still; she's everywhere . . . she comes

in, comes-in-between herself me and you, between the other me where one is always infinitely more than one and more than me, without the fear of ever reaching a limit; she thrills in our becoming. (NFF 263-64)

Certainly these quotations describe Nina, who in "Moon Lake" wistfully wonders what it would be like to exchange identities, to defy even boundaries of race, gender, and class to "slip into them all--to change. To change for a moment into Gertrude, into Twosie--into a boy. To have been an orphan."² It also describes Clytie, who tirelessly searches for her self in the endless faces she sees in the streets, and who eventually retrieves an identity which has always been part of and more than her self: same and yet other, self-contradictory, full, deep, and limitless.

Particularly with reference to the images Welty (and Cixous) associate with female identity, Claudine Herrmann, another French feminist, contributes some valuable insight. Welty, for example, consistently connects boundary-less expanses with her fictional women, as a representation of their limitless plurality of identity. The lake and the night sky in "Moon Lake," the image of the ocean in "The Winds," and the open fields, endless woods, and ever-winding Natchez Trace in "Livvie" are all examples of her metaphoric use of space. Louise Westling also notes Welty's association between open space and female identity (Sacred Groves 179). Herrmann points out that women's space is also often empty, uncluttered by the signs of possession or

hierarchy that fill "man's space." Herrmann's theory echoes Ellen Moers' statement that "open areas provide the locale for women's self-assertion" (qtd. in Sacred Groves 180). Woman, Herrmann argues, "has long since learned to respect not only the physical and mental space of others, but space for its own sake, empty space. . . . [S]he must conserve some space for herself, a sort of no man's land" (NFF 169--emphasis in original). The Big Black River in which Virgie swims, naked and alone, surely is such a region. Moon Lake is a similar limitless country for Easter.

Herrmann also connects women's urge to travel with their desire to add to themselves, to multiply their identities by experiencing a fuller range of possibilities, by wandering beyond themselves.

Women today have displayed a remarkable appetite for travel. Usually they are not motivated by a taste for conquest . . . but rather by the desire to know other human beings, other customs and climates--and although they do not admit it, they want to fight against time, to multiply perspectives and comparisons and to draw into life itself, into their most intimate self, that composition and architecture of the world . . .
(NFF 171)

Virgie Rainey is Welty's most wide-ranging wanderer in spirit, and, at the end of "The Wanderers," in actuality as well. However, nearly all Welty's women are moved to expand their identities through travel: Sara Morton dreams of her yearly trips to festive Dexter, Ellie Morgan plans a trip to Niagara Falls, Clytie escapes the confines of her ancestral home to the streets of town, Livvie discovers the woods and

open fields, Ruby in "A Piece of News" travels the country roads, Jenny in "At The Landing" walks to the river, Dicey in "Kin" rediscovers multiplicity through a journey to her great-uncle's home, Josie of "The Winds" imagines a sea voyage, and Mrs. Larkin's enclosing hedge is parted by the rain which falls upon her and her garden.

Porter, except for carefully chosen and, until the final story, isolated moments in the Miranda stories, offers no expansive areas or opportunities to discover them to her protagonists. Instead, the space her female characters inhabit more closely fits the description of what Herrmann calls "man's space": "Physical or mental, man's space is a space of domination, hierarchy and conquest, a sprawling, showy space, a full space" (NFF 169). Thus, in "Rope" the unnamed woman struggles to preserve a clear space for herself, uncluttered by her husband's rope and other paraphernalia; when he nevertheless returns from town with the rope and she then accepts the rope's presence, the implication is that her effort fails. Similarly, Granny Weatherall's home is filled with carefully arranged and ordered mantle-clocks, spice jars, brushes and combs, and the not-so-orderly boxes of letters in her attic; the only outdoor space mentioned is the one hundred acres which she herself fenced in. Surely the brothel in "Magic" is a supreme example of "man's space": the house exists for his

pleasure, is strictly ordered by hierarchy and conquest, and is "full" of the women who are the objects of his conquest.

Another aspect which Herrmann considers is time. This too is connected with Welty's depiction of plural identity through the possibility of change and mutability that time can allow. This as a possibility for female identity is, according to Herrmann, a power traditionally reserved for men: "[m]asculine system has until now required women to assume material continuity--of daily life and of the species--while men assume the function of discontinuity, discovery, change in all its forms" (NFF 172). Most of Porter's female characters do, in fact, remain in this condition of stasis. Time ticks off endlessly for Ninette in "Magic." She has no hope of ever escaping the confines of time or situation. Moreover, many of them explicitly refuse opportunity for change, seeking to maintain their inward unity and integration through a preserved continuity of time and condition. Laura of "Flowering Judas," for example, feels trapped in time and space, yet makes no effort to extricate herself from her stasis. A similar passivity in the woman of "Theft" causes her to perpetuate her stagnation and further her sense of helplessness. Maria Concepcion clings to the timeless security of her church marriage to Juan. Though their marriage is interrupted by Juan's year-long absence and dramatic changes, Maria

Concepcion splices together the pieces and preserves life
 "as it was."

Conversely, Welty's female characters usually seek change. "In order to recuperate [the ability for change and discovery]," Herrmann writes, "woman must provide another division of time and space, refusing their continuity, fragmenting them into moments and places that are not linked together, in such a way that each is a sort of innovation" (NFF 172). Thus Livvie's transition into her new life with Cash is represented by her releasing her dead husband's watch, letting it fly out of the orbit created by Cash's spinning of her body. The metaphor Herrmann uses to continue her description of woman's necessary and new relation to time and space--"her life . . . resembles an archipelago, a series of little islands that point toward an uncharted sea and that the waves conceal and reveal at whim" (NFF 172)--is nearly identical to the imagery Welty uses in "The Winds" when Josie, moved alone by an equinoctial storm, begins a voyage toward an uncharted sea.

Katherine Anne Porter's conception of core identity, then, is a self which strives for integration and definition, resists change, and maintains a singularity and centrality of focus. Eudora Welty, on the other hand, conceives of identity as multiplicitous--a self which defies definition or restriction, allows the coexistence of contradictions, and celebrates a fluid, expansive range of

possibilities. These basic qualities form the matrices for each author's differing conception of identity. Within these matrices, however, there is an interplay of other, more specific aspects which contributes to identity's composition. The elements of this interplay I will consider are subjectivity, objectification, relationality, and voice. These aspects are so interrelated that it is difficult to speak of one without involving another.

Subjectivity, as its root suggests, involves the ability to be a subject as distinguished from an object, and assumes the "possession" of those "qualities" which would enable such a position. Thus subjectivity can embrace independence, autonomy, individuality, self-esteem, creativity, and voice. Objectification can be and often is characterized by dependence, passivity, conformity, low self-esteem, and silence. In a logocentric society, Helene Cixous writes, the positions of subject and object are bifurcated, with gender as "the" most basic bifurcation.

Logocentrism subjects thought--all of the concepts, the codes, the values--to a two-term system, related to 'the' couple man/woman[.] . . . Woman is always on the side of passivity. . . . A will: desire, authority, you examine that, and you are led right back--to the father. . . . Either the woman is passive; or she doesn't exist. (NFF 91, 92)

Thus for women, subjectivity is often elusive and difficult to attain, as Simone de Beauvoir points out:

In woman . . . there is from the beginning a conflict between her autonomous existence and her objective self, her 'being-the-other'; she is taught that to please she must try to please, she

must make herself object; she should therefore renounce her autonomy . . . for the less she exercises her freedom to understand, to grasp and discover the world about her, the less [sic] resources will she find within herself, the less will she dare to affirm herself as subject. (qtd. in Kreyling, 629)

Such insistent objectification is, of course, incredibly reductive and damaging to woman's identity.

Yet it is, of course, impossible for either sex to entirely avoid objectification; in any relationship with another, we are at times the one who is observed, the object of another's gaze, of another's affection, hatred, prejudice, respect, and so on. Michael Kreyling cites Margaret Wimsatt's belief that a woman must be both subject and object in order to write, a statement which acknowledges the possible and even profitable coexistence of both positions and perspectives within a single identity (628). By extension, a fullness of identity comes not from denying one's position as an object or the existence of one's self as "other," but from not allowing subjectivity to be silenced by a too-pronounced objectification. Relationship need not involve a constrictive, passive objectification, in other words; experiencing the self as an object can in fact enrich identity, if that perspective is used to comprehend one's own position as a subject, or another's position as object.

The women in Porter's short fiction are unable to express a strong subjectivity. Passivity and

objectification seem the almost inescapable and inevitable fates of the majority of her protagonists. Jane Flanders agrees, stating that Porter's women are damaged by the repressive nature of man's laws and particularly by their sexual repression (49). Ninette's assertion in "Magic" is squelched, and she remains an object of exchange in the brothel. Virgin Violeta is forced to exchange her romantic vision of herself as a woman for what is presented as the "truth" of woman's inevitable position as object of man's desire. For both of these women, objectification disorders and fragments their sense of themselves. The unnamed woman in "Theft" and Laura of "Flowering Judas" actually cultivate their passivity and objectification. Maria Concepcion aggressively murders her husband's mistress, but only to restore her "right" relationship to her husband. Thus, objectification for these women is considered a means of providing order and continuity to their identities; only for Maria Concepcion, however, is this goal accomplished. Sophia Jane and her daughter Amy of "Old Mortality" are somewhat more successful in avoiding objectification. In varying degrees, both use their subjectivity to order and integrate their identities. Amy, however, asserts her subjectivity largely within her highly-objectified role as southern belle, and Sophia Jane compromises her subjectivity by continuing to believe in the value of the same southern conventions and codes for a southern lady that she has

mostly abandoned for herself. These latter two, however, along with Nannie, Great-Aunt Eliza, and Eva are proof enough that Margaret Bolsterli's claim--that Porter's characters can "neither take their lives into their own hands nor achieve self-realization outside the roles society had chosen for them" ("Bound' Characters" 95)--is too sweeping, too dismissive of the rebellions some--if few--of Porter's female protagonists accomplish.

It is one of Welty's greatest accomplishments that she dissolves the oppositional positioning--though not the positions themselves--usually associated with subject/object and demonstrates that independence can survive within relation, that need and dependence are not in opposition to independence but can in fact strengthen personal independent identity. Louise Westling's observation that Welty's female characters have a mutual gaze, with no bifurcation into subject and object with one in submission, confirms the ability of Welty's women to participate in both positions in an energy of exchange (Welty 38).

Welty, I think, gives her female characters an awareness of themselves as objects, yet allows most of them space and freedom to resist the potential limitation of that position. Clytie, for example, acquiesces in some respects to her family's consideration of her as a servant, a person who exists solely to meet their needs. She, however, does not represent herself as an object, but as a seeking subject

who lives apart from their demands and who, through her own subjective act, ultimately retrieves a self that is hers alone. Both Snowdie MacLain and Mattie Will Holifield also maintain their subjectivity, though both are, to King MacLain, little more than sexual objects. Snowdie takes pleasure in her husband's absences and develops a life independent of his "visits." Mattie Will willfully engages in sex with MacLain to satisfy her own curiosity and sexual appetite.

The strong subjectivity--independence, individuality, assertiveness--with which Welty endows her fictional women, then, enables them to resist the negative consequences of objectification. Nor are Welty's portrayals of women as strong and autonomous limited to her fiction, as Louise Westling points out; the photographs Welty took while working with the WPA also emphasize women's strength. Several pictures are of women--many of them black--standing alone, self-assured and possessing a "spiritual strength" which is conveyed through their stance, gesture, or expression ("Loving Observer" 599). Many others depict women as part of a family or community, and in these too, the women's retained subjectivity within relationship is apparent (598).

Jennifer Randisi and Ruth Weston also see Welty's female characters as exercising a pronounced subjectivity. Randisi notes that in Welty's fiction, women are the ones

who record stories, whereas men are frequently the objects of their stories (90). Weston calls Welty's works "feminocentric," pointing out that it is women's point of view that is stressed, and women who control and create in Welty's fiction (74). Louise Westling makes a nearly identical observation, pointing out the centrality of women in Welty's texts and the prevalence of their point-of-view, to such an extent that in many cases the only presentation given of a male is through a woman's gaze (Welty 43, 32).

At least one critic does not concur with this assessment; the same claim that Margaret Bolsterli makes regarding Porter she also applies to Welty: Welty's characters are also "bound." In another article, she reiterates her argument, stating that there are no women in Welty's fiction "doing society-defying acts to free themselves for self-realization" ("Woman's Vision" 149). Such a statement seems to ignore the crowd of women in Welty's fiction who possess a subjectivity powerful enough to defy tradition and expectations and to maintain that strength in the face of opposition. Clytie, Easter, Miss Eckhart, and of course Virgie are some of these women.

Objectification occurs only within relationship; it is therefore impossible to discuss the former without considering the latter. Relationality, as I use the term, includes but is not limited to male/female connection; it refers to any interaction between two or more individuals

regardless of gender, irrespective of the quality or duration of that connection. Given the prevalence of their objectification, it is perhaps not surprising that Porter's female characters are rarely involved in enriching relationships--ones which allow their subjectivity expression, which sustain them emotionally, or which provide them with a sense of order and stability, which is an essential identity need for Porter's women. Jean Baker Miller notes that "the ego, the I of psychoanalysis, may not be at all appropriate in relation to women," pointing out women's tendency to form their identities through connection (qtd. in Abel, et al. 10). Though this is true of Welty's protagonists, it seems not to be the case for Porter's: relationship for them often disintegrates rather than builds a unified sense of self.

Jane Flanders argues, in fact, that family, marriage, and love are dangers to the freedom of Porter's protagonists (49). It is true that nearly all of the women to whom Porter accords subjectivity refuse or have no ties with men: Eliza, Eva, and Nannie are examples. Sophia Jane provides an exception in her ability to demonstrate her strong will at isolated moments within her marriage and thus creates her own order. This she does, however, despite her marriage: with the exception of Miranda, relationality does not enable subjectivity for Porter's women. The women of "Theft" and "Flowering Judas," as has already been mentioned, become

involved in relationships which accomplish exactly opposite ends: their relationships intensify their objectification, provide no emotional strength, and encourage stasis and stagnation rather than growth.

What is unsettling about the relationships in Porter's fiction is that if and when they provide order, they often do so at the cost of the woman's subjectivity, as in "Rope," "Maria Concepcion," and "Old Mortality," as illustrated by Amy's life; equally disturbing is the tendency of relationality to fail in providing the order the women seek. Virgin Violeta is disillusioned in her belief that romantic love can provide integration, maternity proves to be unstable as a core for Mrs. Whipple's identity in "He" as marriage is for the woman in "Rope," and neither marriage nor maternity adequately provide the order for which Granny Weatherall strives. Rosaleen's marriage in "The Cracked Looking-Glass" may be somewhat more successful in providing integration and allowing subjectivity, however. Her story points towards the handful of more affirmative--yet not entirely unflawed--relationships in the Miranda series. Some of these more positive relationships are Sophia Jane's and Nannie's friendship, Sophia Jane's connection with her family, and Miranda's relationships with Sophia Jane, Great-Aunt Eliza (in "The Old Order" and "Old Mortality"), Adam (in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider"), and Oillie (in "Holiday"). Though Porter does, then, show her characters as having

order and integration as their core identity need, as Freud similarly described the function of the ego, she does not often regard love as the best means of achieving that reconciliation, as did Freud (Holland 347).

Relationality often enables the freest expression of multiplicity in Eudora Welty's female characters. This is primarily due to Welty's conception of relationship as an openness to otherness, an opportunity to add to personal identity an other identity, with its separate character, experiences, values, and possibilities. Welty's female characters are able to express their subjectivity within relationships, measuring their strength of self not through their degree of separateness but through their connectedness. In fact, Louise Westling shows that Welty's female heroines develop their identities in part through nurturance, a process which radically differs from the traditional male conquering quest which strives toward singularity of self (Welty 62-63).

Critics from the beginning of Welty's writing career have noted the value Welty places upon relationship. Writing in 1944 in reference to the publication of Welty's first short story collection, A Curtain of Green, Robert Penn Warren remarked on the number of Welty stories which deal with alienated people who struggle toward connection (249-51). Sally Wolff, writing in 1983 after Welty's most productive years, comments on the consistency of her

interest in relationality: of her forty-five stories and five novels, only five do not deal with love or the effects of its absence (4). In an interview, Welty affirmed her belief in "private human relations" as the foundation for understanding (Devlin and Prenshaw 449) and in another, describing Laurel's relationship with her parents in The Optimist's Daughter, emphasized the strength available from relationship, the interchange of giving that is possible from connection (Van Noppen 9).

Robert H. Brinkmeyer perhaps best assesses the fullness of Welty's regard for relationality and its connection with the multiplicity of identity I associate with Welty's female characters. Quoting Welty's comment that the subject of her writing is "'You and me, here,'" Brinkmeyer stresses Welty's interest in individual growth and relationship, rooted in place, that that phrase implies ("Openness" 70). Arguing that in Welty's fiction relationship keeps her characters from possessing a limited perspective (73), Brinkmeyer uses Mikhail Bakhtin's term, "dialogic," to describe the relationships in Welty's fiction as involving and nurturing the self while opening up that self to otherness (74). "For growth and discovery one must not see oneself as whole and finalized, but must instead accept that the self in its dialogic existence with others is always in a state of flux" (74). Brinkmeyer's own term for this dialectic is "neighborhoods of self" (73), a phrase which stresses both

the relationality of identity and its multiplicity but which perhaps ignores much of the tension and struggle that Welty shows is an inevitable part of the process.

Helene Cixous speaks of this same capacity and desire in "The Laugh of the Medusa": "I do desire the other for the other, whole and entire, male or female; because living means wanting everything that is, everything that lives, and wanting it alive" (NFF 262). Both Welty's and Cixous' desire is for the otherness of the other--"the other for the other"--and thus they work to keep the differences "alive." The same dynamic of exchange and augmentation is described more fully in this passage from Cixous:

[She] want[s] the two, as well as both, the ensemble of the one and the other, not fixed in sequences of struggle and expulsion or some other form of death but infinitely dynamized by an incessant process of exchange from one subject to another. A process of different subjects knowing one another and beginning one another anew only from the living boundaries of the other: a multiple and inexhaustible course with millions of encounters and transformations of the same into the other and into the in-between, from which woman takes her forms. . . . (NFF 254)

Though Welty's presentation of this self/other exchange is not so grandiose or dramatic as Cixous portrays it as being, still, differences multiply the identities of Welty's fictional women. There is rarely an effort to mold otherness into a compatibility with their personal identities as Porter's women sometimes feel compelled to do to achieve integration. Mrs. Whipple, for example, in Porter's "He," refuses to see her mistreatment of He as cruelty, since such

behavior is disturbingly foreign to her unified view of herself as a loving mother. Thus, she twists her cruelties into being evidences of her nurturance and care. Rosaleen conforms all her relationships into a sameness compatible with her sense of self as a young and desirable woman. She strives to see Dennis not as an elderly husband but as a dashing young waiter; Kevin is not a hired hand and Hugh is not a street-wise punk, but both are potential lovers or "sons." Most dramatically, Maria Concepcion literally kills the Other who shatters her integrated identity.

The girl in Welty's "A Memory," however, abandons her effort to integrate, finally allowing the disorderly family she observes to augment and alter her dreamed-of relationship with her friend. Nina is drawn to Easter's otherness in "Moon Lake" and will not diminish her differences or reshape them into sameness, but struggles to add that otherness to her self. Though it takes her thirty years, Virgie too can finally accept Miss Eckhart's differences and her own conflicting feelings towards her, using her reformulation of their relationship to expand her inclusiveness of otherness.

Otherness within does not fragment the identities of Welty's fictional women, however, because most are able to experience the differences gained from another as a part of themselves. As Luce Irigaray points out, this is not a stripping of the other, nor a possession of it, but a

sharing in it, a nearness to it. There is no subtraction in this relationship, or division, but multiplication: it is, as Cixous also acknowledges, "the exchange that multiplies" (NFF 264).

Woman would always remain multiple, but she would be protected from dispersion because the other is a part of her . . . That does not mean that she would appropriate the other for herself, that she would make it her property. Property and propriety are undoubtedly rather foreign to all that is female. . . . Nearness, however, is not foreign to woman, a nearness so close that any identification of one or the other, and therefore any form of property, is impossible. Woman enjoys a closeness with the other that is so near she cannot possess it, any more than she can possess herself. (NFF 105--emphases in original)

It should be mentioned that though relationality provides a rich locus for the other, it is not the only source or expression of this diversity, as will later be shown. Welty's female protagonists open themselves to otherness through their own creativity, as Ruby does in "A Piece of News" when she draws an "other" Ruby Hill mentioned in a newspaper account into her self; through their dreams and desires, as Ellie Morgan ("The Key") does in her vision of Niagara Falls and Sara Morton ("The Whistle") does in her memories of Dexter; and through the strength of their own subjectivity, as Easter does in "Moon Lake," immersing herself in the otherness of the lake without losing her self in it. Cixous acknowledges the creative capacity of an openness to otherness when she writes that "there is no invention possible . . . without there being in the

inventing subject an abundance of the other, of variety: separate-people, thought-/people, whole populations issuing from the unconscious, and in each suddenly animated desert, the springing up of selves one didn't know" (Cixous and Clement 84). Though Cixous might imagine this openness as a universal characteristic of all creative people, Porter's own practice does not seem to bear out the truth of that belief.'

A final element which is at issue in Porter's and Welty's different conceptions of identity is voice. By voice I refer to communication and expression, usually verbal but sometimes nonverbal. In my usage of the term, voice affirms identity, reflects identity, and communicates identity to another or to one's self. Though I see voice as an aspect of subjectivity, I discuss it separately here as a final point for two reasons. First, voice--or its lack--plays a part in all three of the issues previously mentioned. Voice is the primary means through which an inwardly possessed subjectivity is given outward expression. Almost inevitably, objectification is intensified by the silence of the one posing as object. And, in both Welty's and Porter's fiction, relationality and subjectivity are more enhanced by voice than by any other single element. Secondly, voice--along with relationality--seems to me to be the greatest factor which draws Porter's vision of female identity closer to Eudora Welty's conception of multiplicity

in her final two Miranda stories, "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" and "Holiday."

Porter's protagonists are characterized more by their silence than by their expressiveness. In many cases the degree of their silence is directly proportional to their level of objectification, yet, ironically, it is through their objectification and silence that they try to give order to their identities. Thus, the woman of "Theft" lets other, male voices override or take precedence over her own, while Laura ("Flowering Judas") deliberately suppresses her voice out of fear and cultivated passivity. Both seem to regard their positions as silent objects as safe, well-defined, and orderly, whereas to express themselves as subjects would involve effort and risk. Maria Concepcion is referred to as a "quiet" woman, and it is, in fact, her willingness to let Juan speak for her that enables her identity's restoration. At times, even when a character's voice is pronounced, Porter does not seem to regard it as a particularly enriching element of her identity, but only sustaining at best. Mrs. Whipple in "He" uses speech and language to bolster the problematic construction of herself as maternal, yet Porter graphically reveals the hypocrisy and cruelty of her words; likewise, the woman of "Rope" is garrulous, but her voice is shown to survive only in a destructive, rigidly structured cycle of argument.

Though in "The Cracked Looking-Glass" Porter experimented with some of the more positive attributes of voice, only in her characterization of Miranda do these receive full enunciation. Largely muted in the earlier Miranda stories, Miranda's voice grows in strength until in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" it becomes a crucial integrative force, a determined and even defiant assertion of identity's continued existence, and audible proof of her subjectivity. In "Holiday," ironically, Miranda's voice gains depth and power through her relationship with a mute woman. This relationship, and the voices exchanged within it, make possible a new range for Miranda's identity--a plurality which disperses Miranda's earlier "fiercely burning particle of being that knew itself alone" (310) into a shimmering constellation of connectedness and personal power.

This is not to suggest, of course, that Miranda and Virgie, Welty's most self-realized character, are identical in their responses and identities. Virgie, for example, is more rebellious and less conventional in the direction her life takes than is Miranda. Miranda perhaps distances herself less from relationship than Virgie. Yet both rely very little on societal constructions of the self, depending instead on their inwardly-felt sense of identity, and both continually enlarge their selves: for Virgie, as an extension of a life-long process; for Miranda, as a beginning of a new way of seeing her self.

This image reflects Helene Cixous' attitude toward voice, for Cixous also sees it as expressing woman's multiplicitous identity. "She [woman] lets the other language speak--the language of 1,000 tongues which knows neither enclosure nor death. To life she refuses nothing. Her language does not contain, it carries; it does not hold back, it makes possible" (NFF 260). As this quotation makes clear, Cixous believes voice to be nonrestricted and expansive; it expresses otherness and resists closure. In other words, voice both expresses and is an expression of multiplicity, the fullness of identity which Miranda finally achieves in "Holiday" and which Welty's women possess throughout.

In Welty's female characters, voice is usually quite pronounced. Rarely are her fictional women silent; instead, they possess and use language creatively, in the tradition of the "mother tongue" (Westling, Welty 39; Gilbert and Gubar, War of the Words 252). When voice is muted, silence is at least partially responsible for the women's inability to achieve a full multiplicity of identity. Carol Manning also notes that identity is connected with voice in Welty's fiction, with silence emphasized by contrast with language use (Morning Glories 48). This is, for example, the case in "The Key," in which Ellie Morgan is a deaf-mute, unable and unwilling to communicate fully with the stranger who could introduce her to more expansive possibilities for her

identity, and in "The Whistle," where only two words of dialogue are spoken. In "At The Landing," Jenny struggles to articulate her feelings to Billy Floyd, who to her embodies multiplicity; her inability to communicate her needs to him is one reason multiplicity eludes her and one cause for her ruin at the end of the story. By contrast, it is implied that Mrs. Larkin retrieves her voice when the rain which falls on her parts her lips and opens her identity to fuller possibilities. Both Dicey of "Kin" and Katie of The Golden Apples demonstrate their subjectivity and enable their identities' expansion through their strong, assertive voices.

Welty defines voice in much the same way that Belenky et. al do--voice implies not only the ability to use language for expression, but is a means of connecting subject and object, of encouraging relationality and expressing point of view (18). This feminocentric view of voice differs from a traditional patriarchal view, which values monologic voice as an assertion of individual power and "truth," not point of view. Manning recognizes Welty's own and her characters' storytelling as encouraging relationality. Quoting Welty's own evaluation of southern storytelling ("Conversation in the South is different. It is not hurled stones, as in New York, but moonshine passed slowly to all who care to lift the bottle"), Manning points

out Welty's regard of language and voice as communal and nourishing rather than as disruptive or violent (27).

Cixous' image of the personal and relational quality of voice for women meshes nicely with this assessment, and adds to it the idea of multiple voices, a concept which blends well with Welty's sense of the plurality of identity, with voice being a valuable attribute of that identity:

Her speech, even when 'theoretical' or political, is never simple or linear or 'objectified,' generalized: she draws her story into history. . . . Why this privileged relationship with the voice? Because no woman stockpiles as many defenses for countering the drives as does a man. You don't build walls around yourself. . . . There always remains in woman that force which produces/is produced by the other. (NFF 251-52)

To Manning, Welty's emphasis on the act of speech itself (as is evident, for example, in her allowing several versions of the same tale, told by different characters) valorizes voice and highlights the individual identities of the storytellers (Morning Glories 40).

Though it is women in Welty's fiction who most often are given the powerful gift of voice, Welty--perhaps unlike Cixous--does not consider voice a distinctly female privilege, as she makes clear in her description of Vaughn, the male protagonist in Losing Battles. Her comments about Vaughn's own voice and his recognition of others' makes it clear that Welty regards voice as a forceful enabler of multiplicity--if primarily for women, not exclusively.

He [Vaughn] thinks there's something else besides the voices he's heard all day. He feels that everything may have a voice. But he's in the

world . . . and he feels--what I was trying to say--that there's so much more than what he's been listening to all day. (Devlin and Prenshaw 443)

Two articles by Robert H. Brinkmeyer, Jr. provide an interesting way to conclude this discussion of Porter's and Welty's differing conceptions of female identity. In one, "An Openness to Otherness: The Imaginative Vision of Eudora Welty," Brinkmeyer primarily uses Welty's nonfiction to prove his thesis that Welty's "vision" is expansive and fully engages the other. The best expressions of this openness to otherness, Brinkmeyer argues, are found in her attitudes toward place and relationship, both of which offer individual identity the chance to encounter and participate in otherness. As my citations of this article earlier in this chapter indicate, Brinkmeyer's ideas are consistent with my own findings, though my interest lies in the expression of multiplicity in Welty's fiction and, more specifically, in the identities of her fictional women.

However, in "'Endless Remembering': The Artistic Vision of Katherine Anne Porter," Brinkmeyer attempts to impose the same framework upon Porter's works, and here his views radically diverge from my own. Brinkmeyer's thesis is that Porter regarded memory as a means to uncover a "secret self" and as an avenue to growth, change, and expansion of vision. "To engage one's memory was for Porter . . . an engagement with a mysterious realm of experiences and meanings we all carry within us, in a real sense an

encounter with another and secret self" (9). Brinkmeyer goes on to argue that most of Porter's characters refuse to face memory and thus miss richer possibilities open to them.

Brinkmeyer's article seems to me problematic in many respects. First, Brinkmeyer argues that Porter believes exploring memory opens an identity to larger dimensions without showing any examples of the successful realization of that range in Porter's characters. In fact, Brinkmeyer admits her characters' consistent failure, a point which erodes the power of his thesis. Brinkmeyer may himself see the characters' rejection of memory as the cause for their unfulfilled identities, but when he can offer no textual evidence for the characters' realization of this fact, it seems suspect to claim "Porter shows that these characters' repression of memory and their refusal to enter into a dialogue with its voices are the major cause of the emptiness and desolation of their interior lives" (11--emphasis mine).

Furthermore, through Brinkmeyer very briefly acknowledges that Porter herself had "a disturbing tendency" to deny her own memories, he nevertheless accepts without question Porter's claim that she had abandoned that practice, using as his proof a 1951 letter to William Goyan in which she explains her inability to finish a story ("A Vision of Heaven") because to do so required that she face painful memories (14). In the letter she claims that her

love for Goyen has broken up "the strong core" "in which all my experience seems to take, finally," allowing her more "fluid" and "changing" possibilities (14). Brinkmeyer misses the irony, however, in the fact that the story remained unfinished at her death, and oddly uses this later letter to argue for what he sees as a positive change in Porter's attitude toward memory in the 1920's. He writes, "though she clearly distorted a number of important facts, nonetheless her efforts [in the 20's] to draw and create from her memories [his emphasis] of the South signal an emergence of the mature artist" (15). Brinkmeyer's emphasis on "memories" is curious, especially since the first part of his sentence seems to acknowledge that these were not Porter's actual memories at all, but creations and legends.

Ironically, many of the quotations Brinkmeyer uses to defend his thesis can be used to support my view of Porter's conception of identity as a core struggling to maintain integration. For example, he quotes a 1936 journal entry in which Porter writes, "'Perhaps in time I shall learn to live more deeply and consistently in that undistracted center of being where the will does not intrude, and the sense of time passing is lost, or has no power over the imagination'" (9--emphases mine). Brinkmeyer concludes that the core Porter speaks of is memory, and certainly it may include that, yet even in the process of writing about memory, Porter's larger need for order and integration can be seen: "'all my

experience seems to be simply memory, with continuity, marginal notes, constant revision and comparison of one thing with another" (9--emphases mine).

Also ironic is the fact that the two characters Brinkmeyer discusses to show Porter's faith in memory as a means to this multiplicity of being--Granny Weatherall and Sophia Jane--are two of Porter's characters most preoccupied with maintaining an integrated core self. Brinkmeyer admits that both fail, in different ways, to experience such an expansive self. However, he cannot recognize that it may be their overriding need for order and cohesion which prohibits greater range to their identities. In other words, even if Porter did look to memory as a means of multiplying her characters' possibilities, she seemed unable to use memory in that way for herself or to imagine her characters successfully using it either. Instead, Porter and the female characters she created are driven by their need for an integrated core identity to repress anything, including memory, which threatens to disrupt that order. Brinkmeyer seems to describe them when he writes that

[t]o ignore or to repress memory is to limit growth and potential, for in doing so a person closes himself or herself off from the multiplicity of life in order to consolidate his or her own already established and self-assured understanding of it, an understanding rooted in a belief that a person's consciousness stands alone, without a secret thou, unified and self-sufficient. (10--emphases mine)

However, it is possible that Brinkmeyer has revealed a transition which may actually have taken place in Porter's thinking. The letter he cites, written by Porter in 1951 to William Goyen, may hold a clue to that change. In the letter, Porter writes that her memory--in this case, of her niece's death--"instead of staying fluid and going on and changing and living, sets itself and fixes upon a point in time where the shock occurred and cannot be persuaded away from it, and slowly turns to stone" (14). She claims that her relationship with Goyen "broke up the strong core . . . wrenched me away from that deadened center." While it is doubtful that such a major change could be so instantaneous, time and experience may have led her to try to reconceptualize identity. If the change she claims in this letter could not help her finish "A Vision of Heaven," it may have enabled her completion of "The Fig Tree" and "Holiday," the only two pieces of short fiction Porter published after 1951 (the date of her letter) and before her death in 1981. Interestingly, drafts of both of these works were written much earlier in her life, according to Porter ("Go Little Book" v), but neither was finished or published until years later. Importantly, it is only in these two stories that Porter moves from a conception of identity as fixed, centered, and singular to an ability to imagine it as fluid, mutable, and multiple.

My choice of the texts to be discussed in this study has been determined by how intimately each involves the question of female identity. In most cases, this required that the point of view used in the work be that of a woman, or that the focus be upon a female protagonist. In a few cases, even if a woman was not the exclusive or even principal focus of the text, as is the case in "Rope" or "The Key," I believed the story addressed the issue of female identity sufficiently enough to merit its inclusion. In other cases, the opposite held true: though "Petrified Man" and "Why I Live at the P.O." are both told from female perspectives and focus upon women, I did not consider either work as seriously engaging questions of identity; hence, they were not included.

Thus, the stories by Porter which I discuss in Chapter One are, in order of their analysis, "Magic," "Theft," "Virgin Violeta," "Flowering Judas," "He," "Rope," "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall," "Maria Concepcion," and "The Cracked Looking-Glass." The Miranda stories, which include, in order of their treatment of Miranda's life, "The Old Order," "Old Mortality," "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," and "Holiday" are discussed in Chapter Two.

Ten Welty stories are analyzed in my third chapter, and the order in which they are discussed represents my attempt to suggest a progression in the characters' acceptance of multiplicity. In "The Whistle," "The Key," and "At The

Landing," the protagonists all yearn for the expansive potential of plural identity but for different reasons cannot or will not embrace its range and fullness. The female characters of "A Memory," "A Curtain of Green," and "Kin" move from refusals of multiplicity to eventual acceptance of its added dimensions. Finally, in "A Piece of News," "Clytie," "Livvie," and "The Winds" are found the women who seem to me to possess from the beginning a plurality of identity and work to enhance their already multiplicitous selves through the action of the stories. Welty's short story sequence, The Golden Apples, is considered in Chapter Five as Welty's best expression of her concept of multiplicitous identity.

Porter and Welty offer different, yet not always necessarily conflicting, views of identity. Both portray women who struggle to know themselves more fully, to form identities they can live with, and to deal with the influences which threaten their sense of themselves. Though Porter and Welty begin with quite different conceptions of female identity, Porter's gradual ability to imagine fuller possibilities for her characters finds them, at the close of my study, sharing a quite similar vision.

Notes

¹ Marks, Elaine and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds. New French Feminisms: An Anthology. New York: Schocken Books, 1981: 104. Further references to this work will be cited in the text as NFF.

² Welty, Eudora. The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970: 361. Further references to this work will be cited in the text.

¹ See my sections on Porter in Chapter 6, which delineate how Porter's need for unity and cohesion determined her style and practice of writing.

CHAPTER 2
KATHERINE ANNE PORTER'S SHORT STORIES

Though Porter's lifetime literary output was rather small, especially by comparison to some of today's more prolific writers such as Joyce Carol Oates, it is significant that a large percentage of her short stories examine quite explicitly the issue of female identity. These stories, which differ so radically in locale, point of view, tone, and technique, nevertheless all portray identity as struggling to maintain integration and wholeness. Differences exist in her characters, of course, but not with regard to the construction of identity as much as the compositions of individual identities, ways in which integration is attempted, and the degree of success of those efforts. Examining the stories in chronological order of their composition, there appears to be no strict pattern of progression in the characters to suggest that Porter increasingly allowed them an ability to reconcile disparate aspects of their identities or progressively endowed them with greater levels of subjectivity. Instead, her characters seem to me to duplicate actual humanity, sometimes faltering in their efforts to know and accept themselves, sometimes achieving a satisfied sense of self, following no faultless path toward integration.

Significantly, though not surprisingly, all of the nine stories which engage the issue of female identity have as an element of their characters' introspection a need to reconcile the discontinuity between what they feel should be true of their lives and what is true of their lives. In this, of course, Porter's female characters reflect Porter's own struggle, to greater or lesser degrees.

The order in which these nine stories are discussed is a tentative effort to organize them in a sequence which first shows those who are trapped in an inevitability of identity to those who are able to shape an integrated sense of self. The analyses begin with "Magic," Porter's most bleak portrayal of female possibility, in which Ninette seems fated to live with a permanent discontinuity between her identity as she would like to order it and as it is inevitably structured by circumstance. In "Theft," the protagonist's self-imposed passivity and isolation prohibit her self-integration, causing her to feel robbed of subjectivity and positive relationality. Virgin Violeta suffers the same losses, though through her cousin's agency and not her own. Her initially lively, though immature, subjectivity is supplanted by her harsh recognition of the guilt-ridden objectification expected of women in her society. Laura of "Flowering Judas" attempts but does not achieve integration through identification with a cause she ultimately does not understand or believe in. Her

involvement and tasks within the "revolution" become metaphors for her failed personal attempts to order her identity. In the end, Laura recognizes yet refuses the personal responsibility which would offer her the connection with others necessary for her own integration.

The characters of Porter's southern stories (outside of the Miranda series) are barely more successful at unifying their identities. Mrs. Whipple of "He" centers her identity around maternity, an identity which is societally reinforced and which she believes should be instinctual and innate in women. However, because nurturance and selflessness, the qualities which Mrs. Whipple associates with maternity, are neither instinctual nor natural for her, her identity is dichotomous and unresolved. In the final scene, Mrs. Whipple finally admits her duality and voices for the first time her true feelings, yet this moment of honesty proves to be more shattering than sustaining.

Marriage, not motherhood, is the tie that binds in "Rope." The rope which is the source of contention between husband and wife also functions as metaphor for the binding/bonding of marriage and the repetitive, coiling cycles of argument which form the female protagonist's identity. A pervasive sense of disorder disturbs the identity of Ellen in "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall." Through a heightened subjectivity and relationships substituted for the one connection she believes could have

truly provided order, Ellen fights the disorder, yet ultimately the "something not given back" is a whole and orderly sense of identity.

Interestingly, it is Porter's first published story, "Maria Concepcion" and her last published of these nine, "The Cracked Looking-Glass," which move their female protagonists toward a completeness and integration of core identity. Murder is the vehicle for the restoration of unity in the former, while in the latter, a deeply-rooted, positive self-conception, a comfortable relationality, and a clear sense of voice supply a wholeness of identity for Rosaleen.

In a rare comment upon "Magic," Porter referred to it as "the New Orleans story, a kind of little low-life gloss on the gay New Orleans Amy [the protagonist of "Old Mortality"] knew" (Letters 474). This comment perhaps suggests that Porter intended it both as a parallel to and a divergence from Amy's life as presented in "Old Mortality." On one basic and perhaps superficial level it contrasts with the account of Amy's honeymoon in New Orleans, both in the stratum of society it depicts and the tone it employs. However, on another, deeper level, it develops in more radical form the same preoccupations Amy admits to: a robbed subjectivity as the inevitable consequence of woman's biological and social functions.

Set up as a frame story, "Magic" is told from the perspective of a former maid who was employed at the "fancy house" at which the framed story takes place. The maid, now employed by a wealthy socialite, relates Ninette's horrifying tale as a diversion for her employer, Madame Blanchard, as she combs her mistress' hair. This context both trivializes and intensifies the horror of Ninette's fate in several respects. First, it is clear that neither the maid, who witnessed the events she relates, nor Madame Blanchard to whom she tells the story, has any emotional investment in Ninette's condition; Madame Blanchard, echelons above Ninette socially, perhaps cannot even imagine the realities of a class so far below her. Her maid is careful to preserve this gulf, as evidenced by her comments: "'Maybe you don't know what is a fancy house?'" (39), "'I don't repeat all, you understand it is too much'" (40), "'[I] saw too many things, things you wouldn't believe, and I wouldn't think of telling you'"

Additionally, Madame Blanchard seems to derive at least a bit of voyeuristic pleasure from the hearing of Ninette's story. She does not passively listen to her maid's tale, but actively encourages her to continue at two points in the three-page story; at the first point, Madame Blanchard's complaining that the maid is pulling her hair emphasizes the chasm between the seriousness of Ninette's circumstances and the nonchalance of Madame Blanchard's response to it, as

does her closing her perfume bottle in the second. In this context, Madame Blanchard's name takes on a certain irony: her title, Madame, is of course one shared by the proprietor of a brothel; Blanchard derives from the French root blanche, meaning white. Though in one sense, Madame Blanchard, due to her social and economic position, is indeed unsullied by Ninette's world, in another sense, by using Ninette's misfortune as a source of her own pleasure, she participates in Ninette's abuse, confirming her whiteness as race and falsifying her whiteness as innocence. Initially seen as the antithesis of the madam who beats Ninette, she becomes by this reading a madam(e) equally responsible for Ninette's fate through her failure to fight it. Certainly Porter regarded those who refuse to resist evil as culpable as those who actively participate in it. Speaking of her book Ship of Fools, Porter remarked that it shows "'the inertia good people have towards the evils of this world, the things they allow to happen through indifference, laziness and confusion too'" (ConvP 40).

It is even more disturbing that the maid, whose condition and class seem more nearly to parallel Ninette's own and who was quite intimately involved in the event she narrates, does not seem affected by the horror she was witness to. That she can casually relate the grisly details of Ninette's beating in the hope that it will "rest" her employer is evidence enough of her emotional distance. Her

distance, however, is more than emotional. Though her apologetic comment to Madame Blanchard, "'I work always where there is work to be had'" (39) at first seems to place her in the same optionless position that Ninette is in, this is quickly belied by the fact that she has indeed escaped from the depravity of the fancy house into the "serenity" of a house that is fancy.

This is possible for her while it is not for Ninette because she was, in her capacity at the brothel, considered a service, not a property. Ninette, however, is quite literally what Luce Irigaray refers to as "goods on the market." What makes Ninette's circumstances even more terrible is that she has no identity outside her objectification with either gender: she is sexual merchandise for her male customers, who "like" her only for her expertise and performance, and she is economic property for the madam. There is no community of women through whom she is able to cultivate an identity separate from her objectification, a possibility not even denied Temple Drake in Faulkner's Sanctuary. In fact, precisely the opposite appears to be true--she is even more objectified by women than by men, a defeat perhaps more crushing because it involves a betrayal by her own gender. The madam not only sells Ninette's body but then cheats her in her wages--"'it is a business, you see, like any other'" (39), the maid says; this injustice is compounded by the fact that she pays

the policemen who return her wayward girls far more than the girls receive themselves. Seemingly, Ninette and every other prostitute in the brothel are isolated from any female community, trying to survive in a system in which all is betrayal, even to the black cook, who ironically provides physical sustenance yet schemes with the madam to deny them their very identity: "'she had a very hard heart, she helped the madam in everything, she liked to watch all that happened, and she gave away tales on the girls'" (41).

Given this environment, it is amazing that Ninette retains any subjectivity at all, or the strength of will to exercise it. Her plan to leave the brothel to find less demeaning work has been obviously planned to work within the system set up by the madam, conforming to her demands that any owed money must be repaid before a woman is "free" to leave the brothel. When she re-pays the money owed yet is still denied the right to leave, Ninette can rely only on the tiny but fiery core within her which is all that remains of her voice and independent sense of self. As the madam approaches her, Ninette shouts, "Keep your hands off or I'll brain you" (40). Ninette's surviving core, however, cannot withstand the madam's controlling subjectivity. The madam's physical attack on Ninette is centered on the areas which would most ruin her, since a life of prostitution, it is implied, is all Ninette has known or will know: she is kicked in "'her most secret place" (40) and beaten by a

bottle in the face. That to ruin her was the madam's intent is apparent by her final statement to Ninette: "'Now you can get out, you are no good for me any more'" (40).

The means through which the madam regains Ninette is Porter's culminating reiteration of Ninette's inevitable objectification. Prompted by a sizeable loss of revenue and customer dissatisfaction which Ninette's absence creates, the madam joins forces with the cook to conjure "magic" to effect her return. Gathering together physical parts of Ninette--traces of her urine, hair, powder that has touched her skin, finger- and toe nails, and, most significantly, blood from the sheets stained "'everywhere she had sat'" (40) after her beating--the madam and the cook within seven days' time re-produce Ninette. Their spell perversely reverses the Biblical account of the order of God's creation of humanity as told in Genesis 2:7. On the seventh day God gathered the dust of the earth and produced a living, breathing creature, capable of thought, communication, and an independent will. The two women take remnants of Ninette's physical being, spit into the mixture, and reduce Ninette to "dirt under [their] feet" (41). Ninette, upon her return, is little more than lifeless clay. Bereft of voice, even more noticeably through contrast with the maid's strong "I" which relates her story, Ninette thereafter lives "quietly" (41), submissively resigned to her position as inert/innate object.

Thus "Magic" as used in the context of this story is lacking its usual connotations of mystical and wonderous "other-worldliness." It is not magic, but hopeless inevitability borne of necessity which brings Ninette back to her "home," the word ironic and horrible in its use here. The charm worked by the conspirators emphasizes their physical possession of Ninette and Ninette's final and complete loss of subjectivity.

An important addition to this conjure scene is the use of the blood-stained sheets. Susan Gubar, in her analysis of Isak Dinesen's "The Blank Page," comments that in Dinesen's story, the blood-stained marriage bed sheets signify women's inscription by men; framing these sheets as works of art implies the women's acceptance of this convention (296). By contrast, the one blank sheet stands as a statement of rebellion (305). In "Magic," Ninette's sheets undergo a series of transformations: on her bed and unstained they signify her continual inscription by men without the accompanying "pride" in the gift of virginity willingly yielded to a single man. Later, stained by the internal bleeding she suffers after her beating by the madam, they invert the meaning attributed to the marriage bed sheets in Dinesen's story. In one sense, they, like the "blank page," are a testament to Ninette's rebellion, a "bleeding into print" of her refusal to be inscribed by the madam or by the men who use her body as a commodity. It is

appropriate, however, and consistent with her total objectification, that even this sign of rebellion is accomplished through the agency of her destroyer. The sheets' final transformation occurs when the blood-stained sheets are dipped into the water of the conjure. This act does not purify, of course, but instead obliterates the only evidence of Ninette's rebellion. With this erasure goes also Ninette's last remnant of subjectivity; thus, the woman the spell produces is, as has already been shown, a passive object, "happy to be home" (41).

It could be argued that it is only because Ninette is a prostitute, a woman who makes her living by being an object of pleasure for men, that she is entirely objectified and passive. Though of course this is a contributing factor, other of Porter's female characters, in entirely different situations, are also defined wholly through their positions as objects. This objectification, with its accompanying impoverished relationship and passivity, controls the core of their identities as well. A character who particularly illustrates this type is the unnamed protagonist of "Theft." Given the fact that every other character in the story, with the exception of the janitress, is particularized by being given a name, the protagonist's lack of a name accentuates her isolation and underscores her lack of subjectivity.

Porter, in speaking about the character sources of this story, stated that "[i]t's about a woman who leads a

sacrificial life[.] . . . She had a strange sense of alienation. No one could get near her. . . . The woman really wanted to commit suicide but didn't know it, so she killed herself bit by bit.''' Porter's comment makes it clear that she regarded both the character and the person upon whom she was modeled as passive, weak, separated from relationship, and in danger of destroying their very identity. What it is not as explicit in revealing is that these traits and the objectification to which they contribute are not pressed upon her by outside influence but are self-imposed. That is, it is not her treatment by others which causes her to respond passively, to extricate herself from relationality, or to position herself as an object in those relationships in which she does involve herself. She actively chooses these responses and positions, deliberately denying herself an active subjectivity in her relationships; the story's lack of a historical or cultural context to explain her choice perhaps reiterates that the protagonist's objectification is her "fault" entirely. She confirms the limitations of her subjectivity in a short series of encounters with male friends, positioning herself in ways which allow them to retain their sense of identity while denying her own. For example, the protagonist conforms to and confirms Camilo's set of rituals which comprises his sense of self, allowing him to walk her to the train station in the rain on this

occasion and pay her fare on other occasions, both formalities she would dispense with "if she had not feared Camilo would take it badly, for he insisted on the practice of his little ceremonies up to the point he had fixed for them" (60). Further, she frets about his rain-spoiled hat because of the danger it will do to his self-image and is so obsessed with safeguarding his identity that she feels ashamed when she accidentally witnesses an act at odds with how he wishes to be perceived.

As she watched, he stopped at the far corner and took off his hat and hid it under his overcoat. She felt she had betrayed him by seeing, because he would have been humiliated if he thought she even suspected him of trying to save his hat.
(60)

Her observation disturbs the protagonist partially because she feels she has failed in her "responsibility" to serve as mirror of Camilo's identity; the episode, however, is most disturbing to her because it damages her desire to believe in a consistent, inalterable identity for Camilo, and by extension, for herself. This need for consistency and order dominates her identity; it is only when she is "not in her right mind"--drunk--that she can be calmed by the erratic skidding of the cab driver or face the way "the rain change[s] the shapes of everything, and the colors" (60), and then only when reassured by the familiar and dependable closeness of her friend Roger.

With Bill, her weeping playwright neighbor, her self-objectification takes another form. She still downplays her

own identity to heighten another's, but with Bill, passivity (which is, of course, an element of the mirroring she does for Camilo) is her means. Although the protagonist is so low on money that she questions how she will pay for her next meal, and though Bill, despite his claims of poverty, nevertheless continues to buy expensive luxuries such as a piano, a victrola, and a rug that "'once belonged to Marie Dressler'" (62), she resignedly forfeits repayment of money owed her by Bill. "'Let it go, then,' she found herself saying almost in spite of herself. She had meant to be quite firm about it" (63). This passivity is not only "in spite of herself" but for spite of herself as well, since it accomplishes a denial of her self, her needs, and her work put in on writing the scene for Bill's play, for which she will now never receive compensation.

The full extent of her passivity and self-objectification, however, is shown through her responses to her own romantic relationship with a nameless and absent man. The remoteness of the relationship is underscored by the fact that it is only in a letter that we hear the man's voice, only in fragments that the letter, and the relationship itself, survive at all. Characteristically, the protagonist feels restricted in the relationship, as her response to certain phrases of the letter makes clear. Even language itself seems to control her, to be a stronger, more mutable entity than she is herself.

There were phrases that insisted on being read many times, they had a life of their own separate from the others, and when she tried to read past and around them, they moved with the movement of her eyes, and she could not escape them. (63)

It is not surprising, then, that the protagonist refers to the letter as having "[made] up [her] mind for [her]" (61), in contrast to Roger's girlfriend Stella's active and resolute stance--"'I had a letter from Stella today,'" Roger reports, "'and she'll be home on the twenty-sixth, so I suppose she's made up her mind and it's all settled'" (61). The protagonist's resignation and passivity are further enunciated by contrast with the conversations of the young people who cross in front of the protagonist's cab. The young man's proclamation that "'when I get married it won't be jus' for getting married. I'm gonna marry for love, see?'" (61) can be read as pure idealism, which is evidently how Roger interprets it, yet nonetheless it reveals a purposeful decision-making process, a commitment and mutuality which are lacking in the protagonist's relationship. The two girls who follow also discuss relationship, with the stress now on personal female identity within a relationship: "'But what about me? You're always so sorry for him'" (61). The protagonist's passivity creates a state of limbo in which she can neither enjoy the intimacy of connection nor the possibility of self-assertion or personal enrichment.

Amazingly, not until her purse is stolen by the janitress does the protagonist recognize the negative consequences of her passivity and denial of self. Her first impulse after she determines the whereabouts of her purse is, characteristically, to "let it go" (63), and the anger which follows only "coincidentally" does little to undermine her deep-rooted passivity. After only a half-hearted effort to retrieve her purse from the janitress, she leaves, no longer convinced, as she once was, that she cannot be robbed, yet still believing that a force "order[s] the movements of her life without regard to her will in the matter" (64). Though her thoughts as she leaves the janitress reveal a potential transitional moment for her identity, she remains caught between this belief in a restricted will and the inevitability of circumstances and a growing awareness of her own culpability in the direction her life has taken. The protagonist is therefore immobilized, burdened by the weight of her losses and unable or unwilling to effect a change in her identity.

In this moment she felt that she had been robbed of an enormous number of valuable things, whether material or intangible: things lost or broken by her own fault . . . words she had waited to hear spoken to her and had not heard, and the words she had meant to answer with; bitter alternatives and intolerable substitutes worse than nothing, and yet inescapable: the long patient suffering of dying friendships and the dark inexplicable death of love--all that she had had, and all that she had missed, were lost together, and were twice lost in this landslide of remembered losses. (64--emphases mine)

The eventual return of the purse by the janitress creates the scene which finally convinces the protagonist that her own passivity and denial of self are responsible for her isolation and restricted subjectivity.

Inexplicably, however, despite this recognition, the protagonist retains at the end of the story the same listless, defeatist attitude which has restricted her possibilities throughout. The janitress' biting words, "'You're a grown woman, you've had your chance'" (65), seemingly have been internalized by the protagonist; the story ends with her embracing only a cup of cold coffee, admitting her self-thieving, a confession phrased in future tense, suggesting a continuing pattern of self-depletion: "I was right not to be afraid of any thief but myself, who will end by leaving me nothing" (65--emphasis mine).

The protagonist of "Theft," despite her realization of her own role in her fate, nevertheless chooses to replicate the pattern she has established. She is perhaps prompted towards replication by a need for stability so strong that it preserves even destructive tendencies rather than to allow changes in identity, alterations potentially more disturbing because of the damage they would do to a solid, predictable sense of self. The title character of "Virgin Violeta" also faces an identity-rending situation, but unlike the woman of "Theft" is unable to stabilize the disparities she encounters. She therefore lives in the

confusion of two irreconcilable worlds--her interior world of what should be and the external world of what is: ". . . it was all very confusing, because she could not understand why the things that happen outside of people were so different from what she felt inside of her" (23).

The discontinuity Violeta senses at the opening of the story differs from that which she experiences at the end, and, because it is grounded in a childish immaturity, is not as problematic as her later disintegration. The initial rift is one common to adolescence, the disparity between the ordinariness of everyday life and internalized romantic idealism. Though Violeta is certainly conscious of the disjunction, she is able to so prioritize her interior self that the discrepancy can remain with little damage to her identity. It is a fairly simple matter, after all, to hide her ugly leather sandals under her skirt, close her eyes and return to her dreams, in which "[l]ife was going to unroll itself like a long, gay carpet for her to walk upon" and in which she "wear[s] red poppies in her hair and dance[s]" (24).

Central to Violeta's romantic envisionings is the relationship she imagines herself as having with Carlos, a fantasy particularly ironic since it is he who eventually shatters rather than fulfills her romantic conceptions. Clearly, Violeta pictures herself as the "Virgin Queen of Heaven" and Carlos as "Her Faithful Servant St. Ignatius

Loyola" (22), associations that Porter doubtless intended as evidenced by the title of the story and Carlos' scrutiny of the painting by this title. Violeta seems to imagine herself as a much-desired, withholding woman, a woman who is not subjugated to men but to whom men are subject. This parallel too, of course, is twisted ironically, the "Pious Interview" of the painting becoming a worldly, manipulative encounter.

In opposition to Violeta's private sense of herself as a powerful woman with a strong subjectivity are her family's attempts to "renovate" and "repair" her willfulness, making her into a second Blanca. Blanca, whose very name suggests both the purity and the blankness which is their ideal of femininity, has already attained what they desire for Violeta--the "modesty, chastity, silence, [and] obedience" (23) which is taught at the convent. It is a sign of Violeta's unconscious investment in these expectations and of her lack of readiness to truly live the life she imagines for herself that Violeta finds it comforting "to be assured that nothing was expected of her but to follow Mamacita about and be a good girl" (24). However, it is also a sign of her ability to manipulate her family's expectations to the service of her private sense of identity that she elaborates that sense of identity during these hours of mindless submission: "It gave her time to dream about life--that is, the future" (24).

The area of Violeta's life most at odds with her sense of identity, however, is her life at the convent. It is this discrepancy, in fact, which prompts her remark that

she could not understand why the things that happen outside of people were so different from what she felt inside of her. Everybody went about doing the same things every day, precisely as if there were nothing else going to happen, ever; and all the time she was certain there was something simply tremendously exciting waiting for her outside the convent. (23-24)

In this conviction she anticipates Miranda's later response to an identical situation: "[the nuns] were very dull good-natured women who managed to make the whole dormitory seem dull. All days and all things in the Convent of the Child Jesus were dull, in fact, and Maria and Miranda lived for Saturdays" ("Old Mortality" 194). Again, however, Violeta is able to transform even this decidedly unromantic situation in a way that Miranda and her sister Maria ultimately cannot, with their comparisons of the actual convent with those in the anti-Catholic pamphlets. She accomplishes this by imagining herself as "one of the nuns, the youngest and best-loved one" (25) in one of Carlos' poems: "There was one about the ghosts of nuns returning to the old square before their ruined convent, dancing in the moonlight with the shades of lovers forbidden them in life, treading with bared feet on broken glass as a penance for their loves" (24). Through this fantasy, Violeta is able to assert a subjectivity not allowed her by her family, whose control makes her feel "[l]ike those poor parrots in the

markets, stuffed into tiny wicker cages so that they bulged through the withes, gasping and panting, waiting for someone to come and rescue them" or by the church, which is a "terrible, huge cage, but it seemed too small" (26). Not only does the freedom of dance in her fantasy contrast sharply with the images of restriction associated with family and church, but the fantasy is also a clear defiance of the "modesty and chastity" taught her by both. That Violeta's vision gives her a sexualized pleasure seems apparent from the fact that she "would shake all over when she read this, and lift swimming eyes to the delicate spears of candlelight on the altar" (24). Importantly, Violeta does not create a fantasy dissociated from her actual circumstances, but attempts to integrate elements of reality with fantasy, though admittedly the elements are radically transformed, the convent "ruined" and "square" and without question romanticized.

Ironically, Carlos, whose poems inspire Violeta's romantic visions, is also the one who destroys her romanticism and initiates a far more irreconcilable division in her identity. Archetypal imagery reaffirms the transitional nature of this episode. In a search for a volume of Carlos' poetry, Violeta leads Carlos down a "narrow, dark hallway," through a room which smells of ripening fruit, and into a sunroom which at this hour is illuminated by moonlight. Interpreted psychoanalytically,

this short journey could signify Violeta's movement into womanhood: the dark hallway represents a realm of the unknown, the ripening fruit suggests Violeta's own physical and sexual maturation, and the room filled with moonlight, a traditional female symbol, signifies a transition into female maturity. The symbolism of these elements is reaffirmed when Violeta, after Carlos' attempted seduction, considers the memory of the event "all mixed up with the white rivers of moonlight and the smell of warm fruit and a cold dampness on her lips that made a tiny, smacking sound" (30).

Carlos' unsolicited kiss, therefore, has tremendous import, forcing onto Violeta an adult identity which radically differs from both her previous romanticized identity and her sheltered existence at home and at the convent. Through this incident, Violeta comes to realize that as a woman her concept of self will be determined by male expectation and desire, the mirror they hold up to her. She will not have the liberty of self-creation, but will be made as man's image. Thus, though Violeta states that Carlos is "loathsome," what follows that statement is not a description of his loathsomeness, but her own: "she saw herself before him, almost as if his face were a mirror. Her mouth was too large; her face was simply a moon; her hair was ugly in the tight convent braids" (29--emphasis mine). She accepts, almost without question, his

characterization of her as a "'nice baby, freshly washed with white soap,'" too naive to comprehend that his kiss was not intended as sexual, but as "'brotherly'" (29). Though Porter makes it clear that Violeta's interpretation of Carlos' kiss is correct (Carlos says to Violeta, "'What did you expect when you came out here alone with me?'" [30]), Violeta nevertheless accepts Carlos' indictment of her as accurate. "She was shamefully, incredibly in the wrong. She had behaved like an immodest girl. It was all bitterly real and unbelievable, like a nightmare that went on and on and no one heard you calling to be waked up" (30). Her romantic dreams now effectively converted into nightmares, Violeta is initiated into an adult female identity which requires her objectification, her submission to man's desires. Jane Krause DeMouy concurs, reading this scene as a shattering of Violeta's vision of love, in which a woman can retain her personhood, and its replacement with a vision of woman as object (Pomegranate 52).

With her objectification is a consequent loss of voice. Before her encounter with Carlos, Violeta possesses a voice which affirms her identity--"At the sound of her own voice she felt calm and firm and equal to anything" (28). From the moment that Carlos clamps his hand over her mouth, however, that voice is stifled. She regards her mouth as "too large" (29--my emphasis), and "even to whisper hurt[s] her" (31). "Her breath was gone, but she must explain. 'I

thought--a kiss--meant--meant--' She could not finish" (29-emphasis mine). Violeta's earlier characterization of herself as a parrot trapped in a cage is particularly appropriate in this new context, for it is implied that from this point on she can only "parrot" the words or ideas of another. Carlos, by contrast, is portrayed as a macaw, a bird known for its harsh, disruptive yet distinctive voice. Appropriately, when overwhelmed by Carlos' "macaw eyes" and "smiling mouth ready to swoop," Violeta's only possible response is to scream "uncontrollably" (31). Importantly, it is because "no word of it [the episode with Carlos] was spoken again" (32) that the rift in Violeta's identity remains unreconciled. Known boundaries have been changed, meanings have been altered, and Violeta's identity, once centered around a core which was at least secure if not mature, is now a disintegrated muddle. "Everything she could remember in her whole life seemed to have melted together in a confusion and misery that could not be explained because it was all changed and uncertain" (31).

After a summer of being "shut up" in the country--with respect to both the restriction and voicelessness the term implies--Violeta's situation remains unimproved. Suspended between two identities, Violeta can not adopt either fully. As Violeta prepares for another year at the convent, it is apparent that the convent is no longer an ordinary and drab reality pitted against her romantic fantasies; it is instead

a fantasy world of a different sort, piously isolated from the harsh reality to which Violeta has been exposed. Its shelter and protection are not a preparation for the world, but an escape from it, and Violeta rightly perceives that "there was. . . nothing to be learned there" (32). Now recognizing that "there was no longer so great a difference of experience" (32) between herself and Blanca, Violeta knows she is no longer the child Mamacita believes she is; gone are the childish moments of comfort when it "was beautiful to curl up near [Mamacita], snuggling into her shoulder" (26): "Mamacita's breast had become a cold, strange place" (31). Yet she is also not yet a woman, physically or emotionally. For yet a while, she must continue in the "painful unhappiness [that] possessed her at times, because she could not settle the questions brooding in her mind" (32).

Like Violeta, Laura of "Flowering Judas" also "cannot help feeling that she has been betrayed irreparably by the disunion between her way of living and her feeling of what life should be" (91). It is her need to restore her fractured identity which leads to her immersion in the Mexican revolution, yet because the revolution and its realities (rather than its ideals) are at odds with her deeper sense of self, Laura's identity, instead of being repaired, is further fragmented.' Lacking the independence and subjectivity which would allow her to extricate herself

from her situation, Laura remains, believing herself trapped and without options. At the end of the story, Laura is given the opportunity to renounce her passivity and declare her responsibility to herself and others, but she refuses this final chance to free herself.

Though Laura's motives for becoming involved in the revolution are never explicitly stated, her disenchantments are; through examining them, Laura's need for a stable core of identity can be detected. It seems apparent, through her description of the ideal revolutionist (91), that she intended to dedicate herself wholly to what she once believed was a noble cause: by channeling all her energies toward one goal, she hoped to achieve a sense of direction and single-mindedness which would integrate her identity and stymie an increasing feeling of fragmentation. In her idealism, she seems to have taken for truth what she now sees as at least suspect, if not basely false in Braggioni's rhetoric: "Everything must be torn from its accustomed place where it has rotted for centuries, hurled skyward and distributed, cast down again clean as rain, without separate identity" (100). There once was, however, a great appeal for Laura in the possibility of renewal, of the repair and re-distribution of decomposing parts, their integration into a "clean" new whole, "without separate identity." So consuming is her drive for integration and wholeness that she tries to believe that it is worth the sacrifice of her

autonomous will and personal subjectivity to achieve it: "my personal fate is nothing, except as the testimony of a mental attitude" (93). Though she cannot quite "surrender her will to such expedient logic" (91), she does, nevertheless, seem convinced that incompleteness is one of the worst possible fates she can imagine. "'It may be true I am as corrupt, in another way, as Braggioni . . . as callous, as incomplete,' and if this is so, any kind of death seems preferable" (93--emphasis mine).

Close involvement with the revolution has not, in fact, produced an integrated identity for Laura but has instead further fragmented it; her identity has been "hurled skyward" only to be "cast down again," shattered even further by the discontinuities she now sees between revolutionary ideals and worldly realities.⁴ Able at this range to see these discrepancies, she becomes less secure in her own wholeness and constructs a defense against her own disintegration. Generally this defense can be described as a sort of mental isolation or remoteness. She "persuades herself that her negation of all external events as they occur is a sign that she is gradually perfecting herself in the stoicism she strives to cultivate against that disaster she fears, though she cannot name it" (97). This tactic, though protective, is also of course incredibly restrictive, encouraging a paralyzing passivity, effecting her almost total objectification, denying her access to enriching

relationality, and inhibiting the expression of her sexuality. Laura's passivity is pervasive, influencing her role in the revolution, her relationships, her teaching position, and her continued residence in Mexico. Nowhere is it better demonstrated, however, than in Laura's evening sessions with Braggioni. She sits silently, "like a good child who understands the rules of behavior" (92), safe within the order and predictability of structure. She "dares not" be honest in her response to his miserable musical performance (90); she "dares not" let her thoughts move from Braggioni (98). She avoids returning home after work rather than to face Braggioni or ask him to leave; she allows him to lecherously gaze at her and speak intimately about her. Significantly, her "weapons" against his invasion of her self all reaffirm her need for stability, immutability, and a central focus. Thus she protects herself with a "fixed gaze" (97), with the "consoling rigidity of the printed page" (91) of the book resting on her lap, and with the "firm unchanging voice of her blood" (97) which repeats her rejection of whatever forces might disrupt her guarded self: "[t]he very cells of her flesh reject knowledge and kinship in one monotonous word. No. No. No. No. She draws her strength from this one holy talismanic word which does not suffer her to be led into evil. Denying everything, she may walk anywhere in safety . . ." (97).

With all others as well she exercises her passive defense. Carried to its fullest extreme with her suitors, Laura's passivity is responsible for her complete objectification. It is a position, however, which Laura not only accepts, but desires, for as merely an object, she is not expected to respond as a person, with any real involvement or emotional investment." Thus she can also dismiss her suitors' apparently ardent wooing as a mere convention or law of nature, meaningless for her (96). It is a posture she assumes for Braggioni as well, for safe within her objectification "he is quite harmless, there is nothing to do but sit patiently and say 'No,' when the moment comes" (98).

As this quotation makes clear, Laura's objectification is necessarily tied up with her sexual desirability. Since Laura has made herself to be the passive object of men's attentions, she opens herself to the possibility of sexual manipulation as well, against which her "no" would have little practical effect. That she is aware of her vulnerability in this area is seen through the way in which she dresses herself: "Her knees clung together under sound blue serge, and her round white collar is not purposely nun-like. She wears the uniform of an idea, and has renounced vanities" (92). Braggioni also notes that she "covers her great round breasts with thick dark cloth, and . . . hides long, invaluable beautiful legs under a heavy skirt" (97).

By controlling her body, Jane DeMouy argues, Laura believes she can control her fate (Pomegranates 105). Though her dress may be partly protective, comments by Porter indicate that it may also be renunciative of her own sexuality. Describing the woman upon whom Laura was based, Porter notes that

Mary was one of those virtuous, intact, strait laced Irish Catholic girls. Paul Rosenfeld once said that the Irish were born with the fear of sex even before Christianity. Well, this fat revolutionist got in the habit of dropping by with his guitar and singing to Mary. Goodness knows, nothing could be more innocent. But you know, she wasn't sure of him. (ConvP 123)

Though Laura's mental isolation is intended to preserve the unity and wholeness of her identity, it is unmistakably clear in the context of the story that her efforts are ineffectual. Porter's glosses on the story reaffirm that she meant to portray Laura as a woman who was ultimately unsuccessful in preserving a clear sense of her own identity. Commenting that the model for Laura's character was a woman who "never did anything in life" (ConvP 62), 62), Porter further explains that consequently "she was not able to take care of herself, because she was not able to face her own nature and was afraid of everything" (ConvP 90). This indeed seems to be Laura's own problem. Her isolation intensifies her feelings of detachment and fracture her from time and place. This fracture is shown even through the tense in which the story is told; use of the present tense emphasizes Laura's disconnection from the

past and from the future (Hatchett 153). Thus she inhabits a space between countries, feeling trapped and displaced in Mexico, yet also dissociated from her past life.

[S]he thinks, I must run while there is time . . . Still she sits quietly, she does not run. Where could she go? Uninvited she has promised herself to this place; she can no longer imagine herself as living in another country, and there is no pleasure in remembering her life before she came here. (101, 93)

She is, quite simply, "not at home in the world" (97) though she must exist in it. Neither does she experience time as potentially restorative, but as entrapping and maddening: "Numbers tick in her brain like little clocks, soundless doors close of themselves around her" (101). In fact, one of her most frightening imaginings is of her stasis in time: ". . . she is waiting for tomorrow with a bitter anxiety as if tomorrow may not come, but time may be caught immovably in this hour, with herself transfixed . . ." (99).

Claudine Herrmann suggests that this is not an unusual response for women.

It is because time is harder on women than men. Aging, separated from her children, strength no longer consoles her. More than anyone, from childhood to old age, she lives the negative aspect of time: only her childhood is truly free. She stands out without trying to in youth, then she finds herself little by little ignored as her beauty disappears. (NFF 171)

It is not only Laura's sense of disunity with time and place, however, which suggests her ultimate failure to create an integrated identity. One of the story's finest touches is that Laura's activities within the rebellion

become emblematic of her personal disintegration and disconnection from her own voice and relation with others. Thus the "union" meetings which she attends, with their argument and bickering, suggest her own lack of cohesiveness. Similarly, the "messages disguised in equivocal phrases" (94) which she delivers to the prisoners from those outside are a counterpart of and a symbol for her own hesitant voice, composed not of her own words but relaying only the ideas of another, and conveying not a firm, certain, and open expression of self, but only one which is "disguised" and "equivocal." Laura's response to the revolutionists to whom she bears news is equally telling: "She knocks at unfamiliar doors not knowing whether a friend or a stranger shall answer, and even if a known face emerges from the sour gloom of that unknown interior, still it is the face of a stranger" (97). This response reveals not only Laura's denial of relationality but can also be a symbol for her own inability to know herself, or as Porter puts it, her inability "to face her own nature." Laura knows her external face, the face she presents to the world, but because it emerges from an "unknown interior," a disordered and fragmented identity, she remains essentially a stranger to herself. Finally, the narcotics she supplies to the prisoners, which send them into stupors, are metaphoric emblems of Laura's own passivity and numbness.

Throughout the story, then, Laura is involved in different efforts designed to integrate, stabilize, and protect her identity, all of which are ultimately futile. She is, however, given one final opportunity to accept her connection with others, to express her own feelings and ideas, and to throw off her passivity. The opportunity comes in the form of a dream occasioned by Laura's unacknowledged guilt at giving Eugenio, a prisoner, the narcotics which enabled his intentional and fatal overdose. Appropriately, Eugenio must wake Laura from sleep, for that is what her passivity and isolation have become, and attempt to lead her from the "strange house" in which she remains through her own passivity. For the only time in the story, Laura reaches out to another person, signifying her need for connection and perhaps a preliminary willingness to accept responsibility for the consequences of her passivity. Despite Eugenio's refusal to take her hand, she nonetheless continues her journey outward with him "without fear," leaving the place she does not belong, seeking connection, and willing, seemingly, to follow Eugenio into death. When Eugenio offers her the "warm bleeding flowers" of the Judas tree, she accepts them, but only for what they can provide her, for they "satisf[y] both hunger and thirst" (102). She does not accept them as a means of connection with Eugenio. For, when Eugenio identifies them as his body and blood, Laura rejects both the blossoms and Eugenio with her

"talismanic" word no, the voice of her denial and isolation throughout the story. Porter writes that this moment is one of refusal, an inability "to face her life, what she'd done . . . but I didn't know until I'd written it that she was going to wake up saying, 'No!' and be afraid to go to sleep again" (ConvP 89).

Consumption of the Judas blossoms would mean acceptance of her own role as a Judas to Eugenio, and total assimilation of that role, to Laura, would require that she participate in his death through her own. Thus her cry is one of self-preservation as well. What Laura does not recognize is the potential renewal which would come through eating the Judas flowers, a possibility Porter suggests through her association of this act with the rite of (and here the name is significant) communion and Eugenio with Christ. Just as we must accept our own culpability in Christ's death (as Judas himself eventually did) in order to enter into a new life in Him, so Laura must admit her responsibility for Eugenio's death in order to move beyond her passivity, isolation, and objectification. Paul, in Galatians 2:20 expresses this as a process of death which leads not to self-annihilation but to rebirth: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Laura is unable to perceive this possibility; the story ends with her "trembling,"

"reject[ing] knowledge and kinship in one monotonous word.
No. No. No." (97).

The last three of Porter's short stories in which the female protagonist is unable to achieve complete integration of identity are her only southern stories outside of the Miranda series. These three, "He," "Rope," and "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall," seem somewhat more successful than the previous four discussed in that the women in each are able to accomplish some degree of integration, though it is always either achieved too late, as in "He;" is only temporary or cyclical, as in "Rope;" or is an inadequate substitute for a more deeply desired order, as in "Jilting." Interestingly, in all three of these stories, the female protagonists seek wholeness and integration of identity largely through relationality, in a way that the protagonists of the previously discussed four stories do not.

In "He," Mrs. Whipple centers her identity on her maternal "instincts" for her mentally and physically handicapped son. The matter, however, is complicated by the fact that she does not possess such an instinctual nature, a truth that Mrs. Whipple cannot acknowledge for at least two reasons. First, it contradicts both the conventional expectations for women that she and all the women she knows so heartily endorse; for a woman who defines herself quite extensively by how she is perceived by others, this is no

small consideration. Even more importantly, however, Mrs. Whipple denies this reality because of the damage it would do to her belief in her maternal identity, the core of her sense of self. Therefore she goes to great lengths to convince others, and thereby herself, of the depth of her maternal feeling: "Mrs. Whipple loved her second son, the simple-minded one, better than she loved the other two children put together. She was forever saying so, and when she talked with certain of her neighbors, she would even throw in her husband and her mother for good measure" (49). Mrs. Whipple does not seem to recognize that to deplete one area of maternal feeling (her love for her other two children) to intensify another (her love for He) weakens the validity of both.

Ironically, Mrs. Whipple uses the very acts which best demonstrate her resentment and mistreatment of Him as evidence of his special qualities and abilities, which in turn allows her to play the role of a doting mother. Thus, Mrs. Whipple gives Him a far more demanding work load than the other children receive because He is "so strong" (50); she justifies taking His warm bedding by claiming that "'He sets around the fire a lot, He won't need so much'" (54), yet when the doctor who comes to treat Him for pneumonia notes its absence, she gives Him a blanket of her own so "'they can't say we didn't do everything for Him . . . even to sleeping cold ourselves on His account'" (55).

Similarly, she allows Him to tend to the bees because "'if He gets a sting He don't really mind'" (51), and to grab a nursing piglet from its angry mother because "'He's not scared'" (52). Taken together, these claims for his superiority allow Mrs. Whipple to deify Him, a point suggested by the capitalized pronouns referring to Him and reinforced by the preacher's comment about Him: "'The preacher said such a nice thing once when he was here. He said, and I'll remember it to my dying day, 'The innocent walk with God--that's why He don't get hurt'" (50). Unfortunately, His deification does not prompt worship or adoration but rather robs Him of humanity, denies His reality, and ignores His suffering, another, different reading of the pronoun with no referent.

These same cruelties are often initiated as a way of "working up" maternal feelings for Him, a process essential to preserving Mrs. Whipple's identity. This is the case when Mrs. Whipple allows him to pick peaches; when a neighbor expresses concern that He might hurt himself, Mrs. Whipple calls Him down and "[w]hen He finally reached the ground she could hardly keep her hands off Him for acting like that before people, a grin all over His face and her worried sick about Him all the time" (51). Another more dramatic example is when she sends Him to drive a bull home, though she fears and unconsciously denies the possibility of the bull suddenly goring Him to death. As she anxiously

stands in the lane, awaiting His arrival, her prayer reveals that her concern is not motivated by maternal love but by preoccupation with appearances, though her emotion allows her to consider herself a representative mother, dutifully enacting the role expected of her.

It was just like everything else in life, she must always worry and never know a moment's peace about anything. . . . She watched from the window while He led the beast in, and tied him up in the barn. It was no use trying to keep up, Mrs. Whipple couldn't bear another thing. She sat down and rocked and cried with her apron over her head. (55, 56)

Clearly, assuming the mantle of motherhood allows Mrs. Whipple to appropriate for herself an identity which she believes must be an innate part of her femaleness: "'It's more natural for a mother to be that way [caring, nurturing]. People don't expect so much of fathers, some way'" (49). To reaffirm her maternity "ease[s] her mind" and provides a sense of wholeness, calm and integration to her identity. Thus, when visitors come, Mrs. Whipple feels restless and unsettled until she talks of her love for Him and His special attributes. Only after completing this "ritual" does Mrs. Whipple begin to experience a reintegration: "[S]he always felt a warm pool spread in her breast, and the tears would fill her eyes, and then she could talk about something else" (50).

In the final scene, Mrs. Whipple finally comes face to face with the reality of her treatment of and her feelings for Him. At only one point prior to this moment does Mrs.

Whipple approach the understanding she has at the end. This occurs when she kills the suckling pig for a meal intended to impress her brother and his family. For the reader there is an obvious parallel drawn between the pig's dependence and need for nurturance and His own, though there is very little similarity between the sow's raging protectiveness and Mrs. Whipple's casual cruelties. Appropriately, she sends Him to wrench the pig from the teat of the angry mother, forcing Him to create for the pig the same disjunction He experiences with his mother. Even the sight of "the little black squirming thing . . . screeching like a baby in a tantrum, stiffening its back and stretching its mouth to the ears" (52)--a possible parallel to His later "fits," during which He "blubbered and rolled" (56)--does not affect Mrs. Whipple; she can "[take] the pig with her face stiff and [slice] its throat with one stroke" (52), with the same insensitive deliberateness with which she takes His extra blankets or assigns Him the most difficult or dangerous chores. Ironically, the significance of the act is not lost upon Him; despite His "dimwittedness," He recognizes and feels the pig's suffering, just as He feels his own. At the sight of the blood, "He gave a great jolting breath and ran away" (52); later, He refuses even to come to the table where the pig is "roasted to a crackling in the middle [of the table]" (53).

His reaction to her killing of the pig seems to alter Mrs. Whipple's own response. Though earlier she could slit the pig's throat with callous ease, now "the sight of the pig scraped pink and naked made her sick. He was too fat and soft and pitiful-looking" (52). Suddenly and for the first time she recognizes the cruelty of which she is capable; immediately she rejects it as incompatible with her sense of identity as a woman and attempts to justify her act as out of her "natural" domain and out of her control: ". . . it was the man's work to butcher. . . . It was simply a shame the way things had to happen" (52--emphasis mine).

The episode with the pig prefigures the fuller realization to which Mrs. Whipple comes in the final scene of the story. Having come to the decision to commit Him to the county asylum, ostensibly so he can receive what they cannot provide but actually for the financial and emotional relief His leaving would allow them, Mrs. Whipple accompanies Him on the journey. Though by now the boy is nearly incapacitated, he is aware enough of his situation to respond emotionally to it; his tears clear Mrs. Whipple's own vision, enabling her to acknowledge His humanity and her inadequacy as a mother.

He seemed to be accusing her of something. Maybe he remembered that time she boxed His ears, maybe He had been scared that day with the bull, maybe He had slept cold and couldn't tell her about it; maybe he knew they were sending Him away for good and all because they were too poor to keep Him. Whatever it was, Mrs. Whipple couldn't bear to think of it. She began to cry, frightfully, and wrapped her arms around Him. (58)

Her own tears come not because of compassion but because such an acknowledgement disintegrates her identity, which has centered on her perception of herself as maternal, nurturant, selfless, and tender. With this central myth of self shattered, Mrs. Whipple for the first time admits her true feelings about Him: "Oh, what a mortal pity He was ever born" (58). Her grief at this moment is intensely real: grief for His ruined life, grief for her inability to be the kind of mother He needs, the mother she has wanted to believe she is: "There was nothing she could do to make up to Him for His life" (58). The deepest tragedy of the situation is that Mrs. Whipple comes to terms with herself as a mother at the very moment that she no longer has immediate maternal responsibilities. Emly and Adna now both have their own lives and jobs away from their family, and despite Mrs. Whipple's dreams of their happy reunion, there is virtually no chance of its ever occurring. And He, who has figured most intricately into Mrs. Whipple's sense of self, is irrevocably lost to her. For them, as for the neighbor who drives them at full speed to the hospital, "not daring to look behind him" (58), there is no turning back.

Another of Porter's southern stories, "Rope," is one of her least analyzed. Slightly less than seven pages, it presents an extended argument between a married couple. In an interview with James Ruoff, Porter describes the story's organizing principle: "'I'd heard lots of quarrels among

couples I knew and found in them all the same pattern--a structure like a five-act drama. "Rope" is the distilled essence of all those fights I'd heard'" (ConvP 64). The argument is initiated, as are most battles, over a trivial issue--the husband's purchase of a twenty-four yard length of rope. In the framework of the story, however, the coil of rope becomes anything but trivial, functioning as a symbol of the couple's knotty, sometimes twisted, cycles of argument in their marriage. For the woman especially, since it is to her that the rope is a source of contention, the rope represents not only "'the distilled essence of all those fights" but the essence of her identity as well. She seems unable to separate her sense of self from her role within the marriage. The husband regards a rope as useful, though he can think of no use for it at the moment; the woman seems to consider her marriage as he does rope, somehow necessary to her identity though on the surface it seems more detrimental than necessary. In "Rope," relationship is the tie that binds more than the tie that bonds, shown through the woman's response to the rope.

Importantly, the story is placed in the context of a woman getting her house in order; through this, the woman's need to order her existence, and thus her identity, is stressed, and the paradoxical function of her marriage in disrupting and preserving this order is clarified, as are the roles of other areas. It seems obvious that the woman

regards this move to the country as an opportunity to re-order her identity, to allow it a personal space which was lacking in the cramped atmosphere of the city. Here she yearns for time and space to enjoy the beauty which the country, and perhaps by extension, her identity embodies. Thus, for example, it is significant that one of her primary objections to the rope (which, as has already been argued, becomes a symbol of her marriage and of the battles which characterize it) is that it clutters the space she has allowed for herself alone. "She had borne all the clutter she meant to bear in the flat in town, there was space here at least and she meant to keep things in order" (44). It is perhaps a comment on her own self-restriction and adherence to conventional roles, however, that the room she reserves as her own and seems most intent on ordering is the kitchen, the traditional center of woman's domesticity.

Contributing to the woman's sense of disorder is her apparent inability to have children. In the course of their argument, her husband uses this lack as an indirect attack on her, stating that "the whole trouble with her was she needed something weaker than she was to heckle and tyrannize over. He wished to God now they had a couple of children she could take it out on. Maybe he'd get some rest" (44). Her "changed" expression indicates the painful effect of his words, suggesting that maternity is an unfulfilled aspect of her identity, keeping her from a sense of wholeness and

integration: "She looked so forlorn, so lost and despairing he couldn't believe it was only a piece of rope that was causing all the racket" (44). Her husband's mention of the rope at this point is appropriate, since earlier a possible connection is made between the rope and her fertility. Noticing upon his return from town that the eggs he bought have been "squeezed" (43), the woman immediately places the blame upon the rope, which she claims has been laid upon them. Her choice of the word "squeezed" is significant here, in that it suggest a deliberate, snake-like coiling of the rope around the eggs. Such an interpretation may reflect the woman's unconscious conviction that her husband is to blame for her infertility, signified by the crushed eggs.

The most important use of the rope metaphor in the story, however, is to describe the intricate and sometimes twisted relationship the woman has with her husband. Like a rope's fibers, they are intertwined, yet, as mentioned previously, are more bound than bonded by their closeness. Both husband and wife share the sense of irrevocable and inescapable connection that is expressed in the following interchange: "Lord, yes, there was nothing he'd like better than to clear out and never come back. She couldn't for the life of her see what was holding him, then" (45--my emphasis). Both seem to hold to the belief that "things accumulated, things were mountainous, you couldn't move them

or sort them out or get rid of them. They just lay and rotted around" (47), a comment made in reference to the rope, but again applicable to their relationship. There is some evidence that the woman would enjoy an unravelling of this rather constricting relationship, but is a(fray)ed of the disordering consequences of such a choice. For example, the woman complains that her husband should have remained in town, separated from her, until she had "got things straightened out" (45--my emphasis); later, her husband reaffirms this half-acknowledged desire when he notes that "she had told him those two weeks alone in the country [during the previous summer] were the happiest she had known for four years[.] And how long had they been married when she said that?" (45) The wife denies that her happiness was the result of their separation and this statement is not without its element of truth. Just as a part of her identity craves the subjectivity and independence she associates with a life apart from her husband, another part needs the security and predictability that her marriage offers. Evidently, even the predictability of continuous cycles of argument seems more reassuring and orderly than the absence of relationship. And, unfortunately for this couple, relationality and subjectivity, growth and independence are mutually exclusive possibilities.

Though by the end of the story the couple's cycle of argument has ended and they walk together literally

entwined, she leaning against him with her fingers hooked into his belt, he with his arm around her and patting her stomach, there is every reason to suspect that their destructive cycle of negative relationality will continue--this is only a temporary state of integration for the woman. Both had come to the end of their ropes, but since the husband has not returned the coil of rope as he claimed he would, there remains more than enough rope with which to hang themselves.

Of all Porter's female protagonists, perhaps none demonstrates a more conscious and desperate drive for integration than Ellen Weatherall of "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall." Her efforts, like the unnamed woman's of "Rope," are partially successful, yet her central conflict of identity remains unresolved, as does that of "Rope"'s protagonist. Therefore, she achieves a measure of integration through her roles as wife and mother and, even more importantly, through her preoccupation with external orderliness; however, the overwhelming personal rejection she sustained sixty years earlier has rendered her identity irreparably fragmented and disordered. The title, which combines the jilting--an event early in her life--with her title of "Granny"--a role she attained later in life--suggests the lingering effect of the prior episode. Ultimately, Granny faces death with a reiteration of the abandonment and confusion she felt at age twenty.

No details are given of Ellen's life prior to her plans to marry George, the man who later jilts her, which establishes this relationship as the central determinant of her core identity. Clearly, her marriage to George was to initiate a pattern of order which Ellen intended to characterize her entire existence. Ellen describes this event in her life as a careful sowing of seeds for the future, a "bright field where everything was planted so carefully in orderly rows" (84), her language reflecting the precision and order, as well as the growth and productivity, which her plans give to her identity. It is perhaps no coincidence, given this context, that George's name means "farmer," for he is to preside over this ordering. With her rejection by George, then, comes an immediate and almost literal disintegration of self, a loss of all the definitions and boundaries she has ever known. Hell and earth mingle into a formless fog which marches army-like into her orderly orchard, obliterating by its darkness her "bright" field:

All you made melted and changed and slipped under your hands . . . A fog rose over the valley, she saw it marching across the creek swallowing the trees and moving up the hill like an army of ghosts. Soon it would be at the near edge of the orchard . . . There was the day, the day, but a whirl of dark smoke rose and covered it, crept up and over into the bright field where everything was planted so carefully in orderly rows. That was hell, she knew hell when she saw it. (83,84)

The same fog may also refer to Granny's present inability to recall clearly the day of her wedding and the sense of order

she felt then; if so, then fog doubles its signification as an image of confusion and disorder.

Importantly, this is not just a chaos of external circumstances, but a deeply-felt alteration of Ellen's sense of identity. The hell on earth which destroys her bright field also invades her core of being, disintegrating the foundation for her identity. "The whole bottom dropped out of the world, and there she was blind and sweating with nothing under her feet and the walls falling away" (87).

A redeeming solidity in Ellen's crumbling world was John, the man who, simultaneously with George, courted her and whom she marries soon after her jilting. Though John returns to her an element of stability and order and though it is even possible that Ellen loved him, still the best she can say about their relationship is that it is "better than I hoped for even" (86). The statement which best presents the discontinuity between what is and what should have been is Ellen's description of John's photograph which is displayed on the dresser in her room. Since Ellen repeatedly identifies darkness, fog, and shadows as the elements which threaten to extinguish the light which is her core identity, it is telling that the room as she describes it is empty except for the "dark colors with the shadows rising towards the ceiling in long angles" and the "tall dark dresser . . . with nothing on it but John's picture, enlarged from a little one, with John's eyes very black when

they should have been blue" (87--emphases mine). Such emphasis on darkness and emptiness suggests that John has been an inadequate substitute for George, whom she considers her "true" husband. Thus, the photograph is only a copy, and a poor one at that. "But the [photographer] insisted the copy was perfect, it was very rich and handsome. For a picture, yes, but it's not my husband" (87--emphasis mine).

Because John can only partially alleviate the disorder created by her jilting, Ellen must, through her own efforts, struggle to produce a complete reintegration. Nearly every one of her efforts is inadequate in reproducing an ordered identity, yet Ellen, wanting desperately to believe that only she only can now shape her identity, refuses to confront the reality of her failures. As Jane DeMouy points out, Ellen has no faith in any order outside her own creation (Pomegranate 83). Most superficially, Ellen attempts to effect a private integration through an ordering of outward details.

It was good to have everything clean and folded away, with the hair brushes and tonic bottles sitting straight on the white embroidered linen: the day started without fuss and the pantry shelves laid out with rows of jelly glasses and brown jugs and white stone-china jars with blue whirligigs and words painted on them: coffee, tea, sugar, ginger, cinnamon, allspice: and the bronze clock with the lion on top nicely dusted off. (81)

Organizing the events of her life gives her a similar sense of accomplishment and control; thus she develops an impressive productivity and strength, raising three children

to maturity, doctoring and midwifing for an array of neighbors, fencing in one hundred acres nearly single handedly, and surviving childbirth, milk-leg, and double pneumonia at forty years of age. So compulsive is her need for control that she attempts even to regulate her own time and process of dying: at sixty, she makes the rounds to her children, composes her will, and even contracts a fever designed, presumably, to be an orderly and uncomplicated end to her life.

Unfortunately, these efforts do not accomplish their intent; though they help her to survive amid internal disorder, they cannot effect a restoration of the earlier order. As Ellen herself admits, "there [are] a great many things left undone on this place" (83) and chief among them is an effective reintegration of identity. The flood of incomplete or ineffectual tasks which return to her memory on her deathbed, then, are only a sign and symbol of her more personal incompleteness and disintegration: the letters which remain in the attic, the papers for the forty acres which she claims are "surely signed and sealed" (86) but which are not (88), the death she believes she has prepared for but which takes her by surprise--all these have been put off until a tomorrow which she realizes, on this the day of her death, will now never arrive.

Equally ineffective as a means of ordering her identity is Ellen's confidence in religion and morality. So

sensitive is she to the issue that she interprets Doctor Harry's quite innocent comment that she "'must be careful or you're going to be good and sorry" as an attack on her morality, replying, "'Don't tell me what I'm going to be. I'm on my feet now, morally speaking'" (80--emphasis mine). She bases her morality on her careful adherence to her Catholic faith, believing, as she does in so many other areas of her life, that if she follows a regimented code of conduct, she will achieve a continuity of self. To actually examine her soul is too frightening, since it would involve an honest evaluation of her spiritual state, a serious confrontation of the issues which Father Connolly only jokes about. Therefore, Ellen (mis)places her confidence in her attendance at Holy Communion and her "secret comfortable understanding with a few favorite saints who cleared a straight road to God for her" (86). Ellen's emphasis on the saints clearing a straight road for her reveals her reliance on form as a means of replacing spiritual chaos with order.

Because it does not involve introspection and real feeling and connection, however, Ellen's approach to religion can not provide integration to her identity. She regards her "comfortable understanding" with her saints as "signed and sealed as the papers for the new Forty Acres," a transaction which remains tragically incomplete at the time of her death: "Oh, my dear Lord, do wait a minute. I meant to do something about the Forty Acres . . ." (88). Again,

too late Ellen realizes that form and ritual are inadequate substitutes for the self-knowledge and relationality which are her more desperate needs and which only can reconstruct her crumbled identity. At the moment of her death, Ellen affirms this by abandoning her rosary for the solidity of personal connection, able in her weakness to grasp only her son's thumb, yet receiving more assurance from this than from years of ritualistic religious observance: "The rosary fell out of her hands and Lydia put it back. Jimmy tried to help, their hands fumbled together, and Granny closed two fingers around Jimmy's thumb. Beads wouldn't do, it must be something alive" (88).

Fortunately, though she recognizes too late the inaequacy of her religion, the necessity of relationality to a holistic sense of self has not been a death bed revelation to Ellen. Instead, relationship has been Ellen's only true source of integration in the years following her jilting. As has been shown, Ellen's marriage to John provides an immediate, if ultimately inadequate, base for her identity; however, through her maternity Ellen is able to reconstruct a more definite and stable core. In fact, Ellen firmly grounds her gender identity in her role as a mother, stating that "[a] woman need[s] milk in her to have her full health" (86). Significantly, Ellen also views her children as not merely produced by her, but as part of her, revealing that her maternity is an inextricable element of her identity:

"There they were, made out of her, and they couldn't get away from that" (83--emphasis mine). Further, the association of the children with a blue point of light, which Porter uses throughout the story to signify Ellen's identity, underlines Ellen's dependence upon maternity as a fundamental element of her core being. The first instance of this connection is in Ellen's description of the lighting of the evening lamps.

Lighting the lamps had been beautiful. The children huddled up to her and breathed like little calves waiting at the bars in the twilight. Their eyes followed the match and watched the flame rise and settle in a blue curve, then they moved away from her. The lamp was lit, they didn't have to be scared and hang on to mother any more. (84)

In this passage, the huddle of children and the curve of the flame both suggest the circularity of connection which exists between mother and children. By lighting the lamp, Ellen creates a core for her identity, as is shown through the same blue light being used elsewhere to signify her core self (84, 87, 89). The act also provides a center for each of her children as well: they can move away from her, yet remain in the circle of light which she has created, secure in their own identities because of their connection with her. Ellen's role as a mother in providing order and security for her children is reiterated in a later vignette which also utilizes light imagery. Ellen's recollection of this scenario immediately follows a memory of the sense of disintegration she felt after being jilted;

this juxtaposition suggests that the latter served a restorative function for Ellen. "So there was nothing, nothing to worry about any more, except sometimes in the night one of the children screamed in a nightmare, and they both hustled out shaking and hunting for the matches and calling, 'There, wait a minute, here we are!'" (87)

As necessary and as useful as her role as a mother is in providing a center for her identity, still it has not been a fully adequate replacement for the loss of order she suffered when George abandoned her. Porter dramatizes this lack through the character of Hapsy, another of Ellen's children, who probably died in infancy and whose death involved Ellen in another cycle of loss through identification with Hapsy.

Hapsy is at best a shadowy figure, making a delineated portrait of her impossible; the interpretation which seems to best fit the details of the story, however, is to see her as Ellen's first child, the product of a union between Ellen and George. Jane DeMouy even suggests that the sexuality they shared offers another reason for why Ellen represses her memory of George: unable to face her sexual "misbehavior," she therefore represses it (Pomegranate 82). This interpretation would offer a possible explanation for George's motive in abandoning Ellen--her illegitimate pregnancy--Ellen's haste in marrying John, and Ellen's reasoning in preferring Hapsy over her other children. In

this reading, the labor which she relives in the following passage would be her own, giving birth to Hapsy. "When this one was born it should be the last. The last. It should have been born first, for it was the one she had truly wanted" (86--my emphasis). The word should in the second sentence becomes an affirmation of the appropriateness of the birth order: it should have been (and in fact was) the first-born child. This interpretation is also consistent with the order of Ellen's listing of her children, where Hapsy's name appears first, immediately followed by George's name, who is of course not one of her children (85).

Ellen's deathbed visions of Hapsy are in one sense muddled by her deteriorating physical state, yet in another sense wonderfully convey the complex identifications Ellen makes with Hapsy.

It was Hapsy she really wanted. She had to go a long way back through a great many rooms to find Hapsy standing with a baby on her arm. She seemed to herself to be Hapsy also and the baby on Hapsy's arm was Hapsy and himself and herself, all at once, and there was no surprise in the meeting. Then Hapsy melted from within and turned flimsy as grey gauze and the baby was a gauzy shadow, and Hapsy came up close and said, 'I thought you'd never come,' and looked at her very searchingly and said, 'You haven't changed a bit.' (85-86)

The jumble of associations made in this passage--Hapsy is both the woman and the baby on the woman's arm; Ellen is Hapsy yet still herself--indicate that Ellen's identity is dramatically shaped through her connection with Hapsy and what Hapsy has come to represent to her. The image of Hapsy

that Ellen's imagination produces is young ("she had to go a long way back through a great many rooms") and maternal ("a baby on her arm"), suggesting that these qualities are central to Ellen's definition of herself. It may also be significant that Hapsy wears a "white cap" which obscures her face ("'tell Hapsy to take off her cap. I can't see her plain'" [87]), perhaps hinting that Ellen pictures Hapsy/herself as a veiled bride, emotionally faithful to George. At any rate, there is "no surprise in the meeting," for to see Hapsy is to see herself; Ellen cannot extricate her identity from its connection with either Hapsy or George--she is "Hapsy and himself and herself, all at once" (85). It is to Hapsy only that Ellen wants to return, accomplishing a union which was impossible during life, as the second part of Ellen's vision indicates. A grey gauze, reminiscent of the dark fog of her jilting memories, dissolves their connection. Significantly, Hapsy "melt[s] from within," suggesting the interior disintegration which her jilting and the death of Hapsy effected.

Recurrently, shadow, fog, and darkness threaten to obliterate the point of light which Porter uses to signify Ellen's central core of identity. On her deathbed, Ellen rightly perceives that she cannot "sleep" while light remains: "Her eyelids wavered and let in streamers of blue-gray light like tissue paper over her eyes. She must get up and pull the shades down or she'd never sleep" (84-85). As

her physical condition worsens and her sense of loss and disorder intensifies, the light flickers, dims, and is eventually extinguished. Understandably, since Ellen's feelings of disintegration have been caused by relational losses, she can only reconstruct an ordered self through relationality. Ellen thus seeks connection in her final moments, when the process of dying causes her to feel confusion and isolation more keenly. Imagining the flickering light of her identity as flashes of lightning, Ellen's first impulse is to gather her children to her, as she did when they were younger to protect them from the storm. Now, as then, it is she who truly needs protection from the "storm." But dying has created an unbridgeable gap, and "their faces [drift] above her, [drift] away" (88). Closer at this point to death than to life, Ellen thus seeks out Hapsy, yet no vision of her appears, though Ellen "[makes] a long journey outward" in search of her.

Significantly, the sense of disorder and panic she experiences when faced with the possibility of this second loss directly parallels the description of her response to her jilting. "Her heart sank down and down, there was no bottom to death, she couldn't come to the end of it" (88).

Clearly, Ellen regards death as a second jilting, more horrible because of the total annihilation of identity she fears it will cause. Diminished to only a feeble spark by these final relational losses, Ellen's identity can no

longer sustain subjectivity or personal control. Her own words which withheld retribution for George, "leave something to God" (87), now describe her own position as she passively watches her identity ebb away:

The blue light from Cornelia's lampshade drew into a tiny point in the center of her brain, it flickered and winked like an eye, quietly it fluttered and dwindled. Granny lay curled down within herself, amazed and watchful, staring at the point of light that was herself; her body was now only a deeper mass of shadow in an endless darkness and this darkness would curl around the light and swallow it up. (89)

In the moment of her death, Ellen finally recognizes that the loss she expresses as "something not given back" (86) is not Hapsy or George or the life she could have experienced with them; what is not given back is a whole, ordered sense of identity, a deprivation which has affected every aspect of her existence and which now is completed by death.

In none of the stories thus far discussed is the female protagonist entirely able to maintain a solid core of being. In the two remaining stories, however, the women are able to center their identities, to reintegrate their core selves when faced with disruptive circumstances. However, in the first of the two stories, "Maria Concepcion," this is not accomplished through Maria exercising her subjectivity or voice or through involving herself in positive relationality. In fact, outside of the Miranda stories,

only "The Cracked Looking-Glass" engages all these to form Rosaleen's unified sense of self.

Maria Concepcion ultimately re-establishes a stable core of being, battling through the disruptive effects of her husband's infidelity and her later murder of Juan's lover, Maria Rosa. She accomplishes this, however, largely through adherence to the conventional roles and responses, most of which are strongly objectified, that she conformed to prior to these incidents. Most effective is her role as wife, already highly structured by convention and made even more binding through her marriage being sanctioned by the church. The first portrait given of Maria emphasizes the conventionality of her position and her contentment within it: she is shown "walk[ing] carefully, keeping to the middle of the . . . road," a metaphor for her lack of deviance from the established path for women; the description of her pregnant body and her accompanying contentment confirm that her core identity is defined by the fulfillment of her biological function as a woman and her societal role as a wife. "The shape of her body ws easy, the swelling life was not a distortion, but the right inevitable proportions of a woman. She was entirely contented. Her husband was at work and she was on her way to market to sell her fowls" (3--emphases mine). So convinced is Maria of the naturalness of her role that she views Givens, her husband's boss, with pity because he

"[has] no woman of his own to cook for him" and feels no "loss of dignity" (7--emphasis mine) in doing his own cooking. Juan too reaffirms Maria Concepcion's unquestioning obedience to the parameters established by convention: "'I say to her, Come here, and she comes straight'" (11--emphasis mine), the language again stressing her unswerving lack of deviation from her role.

Her marriage's sanction by the church seems to intensify Maria Concepcion's commitment to its conventions. Though a marriage without a license is equally as valid as a marriage performed in a church, Maria Concepcion unquestionably regards the ritual and formality as establishing a more binding union; though in one sense her choice to be married in a church could be seen as nonconventional, since it deviates from the established practice, in another sense it is far more conventional, since it carries with it the weight of religious regulation. It is significant that Maria takes pride in her role as a church-married woman, savoring the commitment it requires of her, whereas Juan chafes under the same restriction: "'Yet sometimes I looked at her and thought, Now I am married to that woman in the church, and I felt a sinking inside, as if something were lying heavy on my stomach" (11). Though the following words are Juan's, parroted by Maria Concepcion, the sentiment seems to be consistent with Maria's attitude: "She was a church-married woman and knew her place" (19).

Understandably, then, when Maria Concepcion discovers Juan's affair with Maria Rosa, her identity becomes de-centered. Juan's adultery has inserted a third person into their presumably unshakeable union; his unfaithfulness perhaps seems all the more horrible because it flouts the moral absolutes the church exists to uphold. Almost immediately, Maria Concepcion's integrated core is replaced by a shapeless void, the same sense of chaotic emptiness she felt when her house was burnt down by an enemy. "A dark empty feeling had filled her; she kept moving about the place, not believing her eyes, expecting it all to take shape again before her" (6). So crucial are her role as wife and her marriage to Juan to her sense of self that she cannot imagine her continued existence without them. Suicide is not a necessary option; she needs only to wait for a death that will inexorably come: "she wished to sit down quietly and wait for her death" (6). Significantly, her initial rage toward Juan dissipates and is re-directed toward Maria Rosa. Since her relationship with Juan is essential to her continuity of being, she can allow nothing to widen the gap between them; she must preserve a sense of their solidarity against the enemy, Maria Rosa, although of course it is only she who pits herself against Maria Rosa."

Abandoned by Juan and soon thereafter losing her child (her last connection to Juan and the outlet for her "inevitable" maternity) Maria Concepcion turns to her only

remaining hope for integration: the forms and ritual of organized religion. In the patriarchal structure of the Catholic church, Maria is able to maintain the objectification which is integral to her identity. She rejects the community of women available to her in favor of the ordering influence of the church. In the absence of Juan, toward whom at one point in the story she crawls "as he had seen her crawl many times toward the shrine at Guadalupe Villa" (14), Maria now grovels at the altar in a sacrificial posture, "her arms spread in the form of a cross for hours at a time" (9). In the forms and rituals she obsessively observes (lighting candles, receiving communion) Maria Concepcion achieves a limited integration, yet cannot achieve a revitalizing power from them. For example, Maria Concepcion tries to convince herself that her prayers are effectual, accessing her directly to the power of God, yet Lupe forces her to confront the impotence of her prayers to bring about any actual change in her circumstances.

Confronting Lupe, Maria rejects Lupe's prayers for her:

'Keep your prayers to yourself, Lupe, or offer them for others who need them. I will ask God for what I want in this world.'

'And will you get it, you think, Maria Concepcion?' asked Lupe, tittering cruelly and smelling the wooden mixing spoon. 'Did you pray for what you have now?'

Afterward everyone noticed that Maria Concepcion went oftener to church . . . (9)

Contributing to her powerlessness is Maria Concepcion's absence of voice. Maria is repeatedly characterized as a

quiet woman and is specifically contrasted with Maria Rosa in this respect. Juan notes that "'with Maria Rosa it is all different. She is not silent; she talks'" (12).

Although he insinuates that there is an unsettling quality to Maria Concepcion's silence, suggesting a kind of power through her incomprehensibility, the fact remains that her muteness further eats away at her crumbling identity: "She was gaunt, as if something were gnawing her away inside, . . . and she would not speak a word if she could help it" (10). Within her relationship with Juan, however--in which she is almost totally objectified--there is no necessity for voice. In fact, having an independent voice is incompatible with her perception of her role as wife to Juan. Clearly, to exercise her voice would be enabling, giving her the ability to confront and deal with the reality of what she faces. Yet having had little experience in testing her voice, such power eludes her. Only once in the story is she able to use words as a means of ordering her identity--when she voices the word whore to describe Maria Rosa: by verbalizing the word, she makes the characterization real and through it justifies her eventual murder of Maria Rosa. "She heard herself saying a harsh, true word about Maria Rosa, saying it aloud as if she expected someone to agree with her: 'Yes, she is a whore! She has no right to live'" (6).'

Maria Concepcion's murder of Maria Rosa has a dual effect on Maria Concepcion, and here again, voice--or its lack--plays an important part in determining the condition of her identity. In the scene in which Maria Concepcion resolves to kill Maria Rosa, Maria Concepcion's silence emphasizes the disordering effect of that decision. In contrast to the straightness of stride she possesses at the opening of the story, Maria Concepcion now wanders distractedly, "trying to place herself" (13), her stumbling gait and the tangled cords which tie her fowls mirroring her interior disorientation. When she finally stops, having determined to kill Maria Rosa, the release she experiences is described as an unleashing of "the thing which had for so long squeezed her whole body into a tight dumb knot of suffering" (13--emphasis mine). Yet silence, not vocalization, dominates the scene as she sits "in deadly silence and immobility," the phrase suggesting the equation between passivity and silence as well as the potential effects of both on Maria Concepcion's identity--they can be deadly. She cries silently and with no tears. With no capacity to truly voice her emotion and thus actualize it and confront it, "all her being [remains] a dark confused memory of grief burning in her at night, of deadly baffled anger eating at her by day. . . ." (13).

This sense of interior disintegration remains even--perhaps especially--after Maria Concepcion's murder of Maria

Rosa. In the scene in which she tells Juan of her act, in "a ghostly whisper" (14), Maria Concepcion's suppression of voice is emphasized so insistently that it seems more nearly the cause of her disorder than the act of murder itself. At different points, Maria Concepcion is characterized as "silent and perfectly rigid, holding to him with resistless strength," as "silent and still" and her voice as "low," repeating "meaningless phrases over and over" (15, 14).

Suddenly, from the moment that Maria Concepcion places herself in Juan's hands, her silence is transformed from a contributing factor of her sense of disintegration to a restorative feature, because it is now placed in the context of her familiar, objectified relationship to Juan; that is, while on her own, Maria Concepcion needed her own voice to restore order to her shattered identity; her silence therefore prohibited integration. Now Maria Concepcion has Juan to speak for her or to supply her with words. Her silence is now a validation and a re-assumption of Juan's dominance over her and a reassurance of the safety of her objectification. Only now, in this restored role, can Maria Concepcion begin to reestablish a wholeness of identity. Obeying Juan's command of "'Quiet! Not a sound!'" (14), Maria Concepcion, "following a few steps in the rear, near Juan" (17), can look into the face of her dead enemy and feel "her blood [run] smoothly again" (17). She is now released from the necessity of expressing her own voice

through being given Juan's words to repeat. Juan's words in her mouth are effortless and reinforce the order of her conventional role:

Maria Concepcion heard her own voice answering without a break. It was true at first she was troubled when her husband went away, but after that she had not worried about him. It was the way of men, she believed. She was a church-married woman and knew her place. Well, he had come home at last. She had gone to market, but had come back early, because now she had her man to cook for. That was all. (19)

For us as readers, the "that was all" that ends this passage is a horrifying, restricting finality. For Maria Concepcion, however, it is a stabilizing truth, providing "all" the definition and security she needs to regain her internal order.

Completing the restoration of her core identity are the reassurance of her circle of friends and, most importantly, her reinstatement as a mother. As for the former, though the community's support could be considered an example of positive relationality, it lacks mutuality and subjectivity on Maria Concepcion's part. That is, there is no indication that Maria can or will reciprocate their support; she describes them only in terms of what they have done and will do for her, placing herself in the position of passive recipient of their protection and aid. Thus with them as well Maria allows her almost complete objectification:

Maria Concepcion felt herself guarded, surrounded, upborne by her faithful friends. They were around her, speaking for her, defending her, the forces of life were ranged invincibly with her against the beaten dead. . . . Maria Concepcion looked

from one to the other of the circling, intent faces. Their eyes gave back reassurance, understanding, a secret and mighty sympathy. (20--emphasis mine)

It is Maria Concepcion's claiming of Maria Rosa's newborn child, however, which, together with the restoration of her marriage, completes her process of integration. The death of her own baby, it is implied, contributed nearly as much to Maria Concepcion's disordered sense of self as did Juan's infidelity and abandonment. One neighbor, in fact, though admittedly motivated by a desire to downplay a motive for Maria Concepcion's murder of Maria Rosa, claims that "'It [is] the loss of her child and not of her husband that changed her so'" (19). Her name, of course, also reinforces the importance of a maternal role to her identity. Therefore, claiming Maria Rosa's baby as her own returns to Maria Concepcion "the right inevitable proportions of a woman" (3). Her movements as she secures milk for the baby are "very deliberate and even," and her posture as she relaxes with the baby suggests the circularity of completeness which nurturing the child provides. Porter portrays Maria Concepcion as participating in the unity and wholeness of the natural world as she "nurses" her child.

The child, fed and asleep, was cradled in the hollow of her crossed legs. The silence overfilled the world, the skies flowed down evenly to the rim of the valley, the stealthy moon crept slantwise to the shelter of the mountains. She felt soft and warm all over; she dreamed that the newly born child was her own, and she was resting deliciously. (21)

Thus though the last glimpse we receive of Maria Concepcion is her sitting alone with her child, it does not seem a scene which affirms her autonomy and separateness, as Suzanne Bunkers contends (28). The sleeping form of Juan is crucial to her sense of integration, as are her roles as wife and mother. Therefore, although Maria Concepcion is able to reestablish an integrated core identity, it is accomplished through denying herself independence and voice.

Cristina Maria Teixeira writes that Maria Concepcion is "able to remain basically unchanged, to reinforce and to exert [her] own laws and codes of honour that was [sic] an intrinsic part of her self, of her identity" (46). Teixeira is correct in seeing Maria Concepcion's identity as constant and her greatest identity need as integration. She seems only in error to view the laws and codes that Maria Concepcion upholds as "her own," for they are not of her own creation, but are adopted--unchanged and unquestioned--from the patriarchal tradition she exists securely within.

It is worth noting that Maria Rosa was quite possibly more successful in retaining her subjectivity and voice than is Maria Concepcion, as is shown primarily through her association with bees. It has already been noted that Maria Rosa speaks more freely than does Maria Concepcion; though Juan attempts to silence her voice through slaps and commands, there is no indication that his techniques are permanently effective. She, like the bees which surround

her jacal, continues to express herself, a counterpart to the bees' "slow thrilling hum" (4). There are also parallels with the bees' productivity: Maria Rosa is able to deliver a healthy baby whereas Maria Concepcion is not, a fact that is foreshadowed by Maria Concepcion's comment that her baby will be "mark[ed]" if she does not eat Maria Rosa's honey; since her discovery of Juan's affair with Maria Rosa interrupts her intention, she, of course, never eats the honey. Most important, however, is the association made between the bees and pleasure. All aspects of the bees are described as pleasant--their "thrilling hum," their sweet honey, their "delicious aroma" (4). Juan explicitly compares Maria Rosa to the bees' honey when he states, "'You know how she used to keep those clean little bees in their hives? She is like their honey to me'" (12). Significantly, he does not compare Maria Rosa to the "clean little bees" themselves, suggesting that she could not be "kept" precisely as the bees are. He emphasizes instead the pleasure, in this case sexual, that Maria Rosa provides him. Though Maria Rosa dies because she "had eaten too much honey and had had too much love" (17), still she had experienced that full sexual freedom, which obviously gave her as much pleasure as it did Juan (6, 20). Further, it is a pleasure which perhaps only Maria Rosa is capable of providing: the hives deteriorate and become unproductive in Maria Rosa's absence, and Juan states plainly that Maria Rosa "'pleases

me more than any other woman'" (12). There is no indication that Maria Concepcion can share in this sexual freedom or pleasure--she never tastes the honey she so craves at the opening of the story (4) and can only hear the echo of Maria Rosa's bees in her own ears (6).

"The Cracked Looking-Glass" differs from all the previously discussed stories in that it moves away, as do the Miranda stories, from a strict insistence upon a core conception of identity for its female protagonist. Rosaleen does maintain, throughout the story, a steady and positive conception of herself, but the foundation for that conception shifts. The need for integration and wholeness remains, but identity is now progressive and alterable. Hence, for much of the story, Rosaleen centers her identity around a perception of herself which is rooted in the past, but which survives into the present through her ability to vivify it through storytelling and memory. Dominating this view of herself is a belief in her physical attractiveness, sexual or romantic desirability, and youthfulness. Following her trip to New York and Boston, however, Rosaleen re-evaluates her definition of self, centering it on a more realistic understanding of who she is now.

Both the title of the story and the looking-glass itself of course contribute importantly to the analysis of Rosaleen's identity. Though Porter claimed another intention in the choice of her title," the choice of the

word looking-glass over mirror is appropriate in another way as well. Looking-glass stresses the act of seeing, the possibility of individual perception, in a way that mirror cannot; mirror suggests a more literal and direct representation, without the mitigation of the viewer's response to what she sees. The fact that the looking-glass is cracked further emphasizes the role of subjective perception in constructing an image of self, as does the warped surface of the glass itself. Rosaleen examines herself in the looking-glass four times in the story; all viewings immediately follow incidents which cause her to doubt the security of her identity. With the exception of the last, each glance into the glass allows Rosaleen to preserve her sense of self. That is, because the glass is warped and cracked, Rosaleen is able to justify and explain the possible discrepancy between her perception of self and the actuality which may exist outside of that perception. Thus she is able to maintain a self separate from appearances or even actualities. Rosaleen's need to preserve the self that should be and avoid the self which is perhaps explains why she "forgets" to buy a new mirror while in Boston. Porter's own struggle with this same disjunction, the actual and the wished-for self, is what is being played out through her characters.

Rosaleen has a strong, positive self-image; though at the time of the story she is forty-five, she has managed to

preserve the same sense of identity she had at age twenty. Through endlessly and repeatedly relating the stories of her glorious youth--the dances, dresses and finery, clamoring beaux--Rosaleen carries the past into the present and, despite her dramatically different circumstances, remains essentially unchanged within herself. A resident of Connecticut for twenty-five years, she still considers herself a "County Sligo woman;" at forty-five years of age, she still pictures herself as a youthful beauty; married for twenty-five years, she remembers herself as a flirtatious, desirable belle. This conception is not just living memory, but a viable, working force in her present identity. By contrast, Dennis acknowledges the reality and influence of his past but does not consider it as actively affecting his present identity: "His past lay like a great lump within him; there it was, he knew it all at once, when he thought of it, like a chest a man has packed away, knowing all that is in it without troubling to name or count the objects" (106).

What Rosaleen can accomplish for herself, she cannot duplicate for Dennis. Thirty years older than Rosaleen and more dramatically affected by age, Dennis, to Rosaleen, bears no resemblance to the man she married.

But it was Dennis getting old that took the heart out of her. . . . A fine man, oh, a fine man Dennis was in those days! Dennis rose before her eyes in his black suit and white gloves, a knowledgeable man who could tell the richest people the right things to order for a good dinner. . . . And now. No, she couldn't believe

it was Dennis any more. Where was Dennis now?
(108)

Though she can remember Dennis as he once was, the past image is irreconcilable with the present man. Because her self-image is at least partially contingent upon her memory of Dennis, however, she cannot simply accept this discontinuity; she therefore constructs an exaggerated version of Dennis which complements and even surpasses her own embellished self-portrait. To the salesman, Mr. Pendleton, she presents Dennis in his youth as a man invincibly strong, yet unreasonably kind as well (118).

Though Rosaleen recognizes these imaginings cannot reproduce a youthful Dennis, she cannot accept for her own life the truth Dennis has resigned himself to: "[Rosaleen] couldn't always understand how there comes a time when a man is finished, and there is no more to be done that way" (110). Her taking in of Kevin and her later attempt to duplicate the arrangement with Hugh seem designed to surround herself with the Irish youthfulness which she considers herself also as possessing. Though she describes their relation to her as a brother (104, 127) or as a son (114, 127), it is evident that her investment in them is more complex than these innocent connections would suggest. Rosaleen's relationship with Kevin, for example, progresses amiably until Rosaleen casts herself in the role of a jealous rival for his affections by speaking derogatorily of his girlfriend. Unable to admit or recognize that she has

depended upon the relationship in part to provide confirmation of her desirability, Rosaleen stymies the disintegration that Kevin's "rejection" could potentially create for her identity by convincing herself that they parted as friends and that he will write or one day return. Jane DeMouy correctly sees in Rosaleen's relationship with Kevin a desire to integrate a potentially scattered self (Pomegranate 126). Through him, she meets two needs crucial to her identity--that of mother and of lover (133). Significantly, immediately after Kevin's departure, Rosaleen gazes into the cracked looking-glass in order to reaffirm the constancy and veracity of her self-concept, which is shaken by Kevin's leaving. Her comments at once absolve her of responsibility for Kevin's departure and reiterate how inseparable the notion of her desirability is to her identity: "'Before God I don't look like that,' she said, hanging [the looking-glass] on the nail again. 'If I did, it's no wonder he was leaving. But I don't'" (109).

Rosaleen's offer to Hugh is even more consciously innocent, motivated by a desire to recreate the relationship she had with Kevin. Because propriety and morality are integral parts of her identity (Rosaleen earlier is strongly disturbed by the mere memory of an indiscreet kiss: "even now her heart stopped on her when she thought how near she'd come to being a girl with no character" [114--emphasis mine]) Rosaleen is genuinely shocked when Hugh construes her

invitation to live with her as a sexual proposition. It is this same embedded morality which makes her unaware of the position she took five years earlier with Kevin. Still, the episode reveals her even more deeply rooted need to see herself as desirable, for despite her anger at Hugh's misreading of her intentions, she reminds herself that he had referred to her as a "fine woman" and thinks to herself that "he would have made love to her if she hadn't stopped him, maybe" (129). Even more telling is that this encounter brings to the surface her investment in her earlier relationship with Kevin. "Kevin had loved her all the time, and she had sent him away to that cheap girl who wasn't half good enough for him! . . . Kevin had loved her and she had loved Kevin and, oh, she hadn't known it in time!" (129)

Another relationship which, to Rosaleen, verifies her self-conception and thus allows her to keep intact her core identity as desirable, youthful, and vivacious is the one she shares with Guy Richards. Though with Kevin and to a lesser degree, Hugh, Rosaleen needed an affirmation of her desirability, with Guy, her need is to give expression to her desire. This relationship, therefore, is most important of the three because through it Rosaleen not only preserves her identity but enacts it as well. Her responses to Guy are sexualized and marked by a tension which is the result of Rosaleen trying to balance her moral character with her sexuality. From his first description, Richards is

presented as a Bacchanalian reveller, potently virile, the embodiment, presumably, of all that Rosaleen abhors but to which in reality she is drawn.

He was a great offense to Rosaleen, with his shaggy mustaches and his shirt in rags till the brawny skin showed through. . . . He would pass by the house driving his bony gray horse at top speed, standing up in the rickety buggy singing in a voice like a power of scrap-iron falling, drunk as a lord before breakfast. (115-16)

What begins as simply a drunken invitation to Rosaleen to ride with him is inflated by Rosaleen into a proposition, a proposition which Rosaleen rehearses repeatedly in her mind and which she apparently wishes would take a more tangible form: "She had a series of visions of Richards laying a finger on her and herself shooting him dead in his tracks. . . . Richards never had offered to lay a finger on Rosaleen, but now and again he pulled up at the gate when he was not quite drunk" (116--emphases mine). During his subsequent visits, Rosaleen imagines his silence about the incident as a sort of passive flirtation, refusing to consider that Richards may have no memory of the event: "The cheek of him, pretending nothing had happened" (117), she thinks to herself and is gratified when "the hellion . . . winked his near eye at her" (117). This wink occasions another glance in the looking-glass, this time to check "what kind of look she had on her" (117). This quite possibly suggests that although she intends her expression to be disapproving and cold, she fears the possibility that

her face reveals the desire that she has deliberately tried to conceal.

The importance of her sexuality to her identity is indicated by the fact that Rosaleen feels most fragmented and disordered when others connect her with an active sexuality. Perhaps she feels that they are speaking loosely and commonly about an element of her identity which she believes she has carefully and properly repressed. Not surprisingly, Rosaleen reintegrates her disrupted identity at these moments by dismissing these opinions, re-writing them to involve more admissible aspects of her identity. Thus to explain Hugh's "proposition," she considers that he may have misconstrued her boldness and fluency of voice (129); with her native neighbor, who accuses her of seducing young men, she concludes that the woman must have been motivated by jealousy, once more emphasizing her desirability (131).

It would be, of course, far too reductive to imply that the purpose of Rosaleen's relationship with any or all of these three men was only to confirm her desirability or ability to desire. Certainly, for example, her relationships with both Hugh and Kevin satisfy a maternal aspect of her identity and provide a sense of ethnic bonding through their common Irish heritage. Equally as significant as any of these, however, is the role the relationships play in confirming and exercising Rosaleen's voice, the feature

of her identity--through storytelling--which contributes most to her subjectivity and prevents her objectification. In her valorization of Rosaleen's voice, Porter anticipates the force and importance of Miranda's voice to her sense of self; in "The Cracked Looking-Glass" many of Porter's ideas about voice are thought through, to achieve full expression in the Miranda stories.

The strength of Rosaleen's voice is especially emphasized through her contrast with Dennis, upon whom time has "put a quietus" (103). Dennis seems to regard language in the same way that he regards being Irish: language must be serious, useful, thoughtful, and above all, truthful, traits he considers himself as possessing and which characterize his speech as well. Rosaleen, by contrast, does not define and thus limit language in this way; she enjoys language for its own sake along with her voice which gives it expression. What seems dull repetition to Dennis because he has heard the basic content innumerable times is ever new to Rosaleen because each expression is altered by a different context, a new perspective, a new arrangement of the "basic content." Not limited to her own enjoyment, Rosaleen's voice gives others pleasure as well. To give pleasure to others is, Rosaleen claims, a strong motive of her storytelling. "'[H]e [the salesman] wanted a story so I gave him a good one'" (105). To her, then, the veracity of what she says is secondary to the achievement of the desired

effect; this is the same logic which controls her conception of identity. Such thinking is foreign to Dennis, who is noticeably unsettled by Rosaleen's "lies:" "He felt helpless, as if he were involved in some disgraceful fraud. He wanted to speak up once for all and say, 'It's a lie, Rosaleen, it's something you've made up and now let's hear no more about it'" (121). Yet even with Dennis, Rosaleen's voice is not without effect. Hearing her stories over and over again, Dennis begins to be convinced of their truthfulness, begins to see the truth that lies below the surface of her tales--a truthfulness in spirit, a loyalty to what should be true--to which Rosaleen has never been untruthful. Contemplating her most often-repeated story, which chronicles the happy life and tragic death of the Billy-cat, Dennis realizes that he is isolated from participating in the spirit which moves Rosaleen through his own confining attitude: "Could this really have been all? He had a nightmarish feeling that somewhere just out of his reach lay the truth about it, he couldn't swear for certain, yet he was almost willing to swear that this had been all" (122). By the end of the story he is less concerned about the veracity of her voice and far more eager to experience its integrating effect: "He knew he would never hear the straight of it [her trip], but he wanted Rosaleen's story about it" (133).

Though Dennis comes to this attitude late, both Kevin and Guy Richards draw from the power of Rosaleen's voice throughout. The interplay of Rosaleen's and Kevin's voices provides pleasure and a sense of completion and integration to Rosaleen's identity. "For more than a year they had tried to get the best of each other in the talk, and sometimes it was one and sometimes another, but a gay easy time and such a bubble of joy like a kettle singing" (115). In this passage, intimacy is suggested by the easy exchange of voices; contentment and wholeness are conveyed through the whistling kettle, which is used in another scene to create the same aura (107).

With Guy Richards, the necessity of voice to Rosaleen's identity is even more pronounced. Richards himself has "a voice like a power of scrap-iron falling" (116), a potency which at first intimidates Rosaleen and overshadows her own voice. Listening to stories of his youth, Rosaleen is convinced of the superiority of her own youth, yet with him she does not offer a recounting of it; seemingly daunted by the intemperance and power of his words, Rosaleen's voice is maddingly silenced: "It was enough to make a woman wild not to find a word in her mouth for such boldness" (117). With time, however, Rosaleen establishes herself as Richards' equal, not merely relating her stories alongside his own, but at times providing the only voice among the three. Richards, through his fascinated and attentive listening,

validates her voice and affirms its power." Rosaleen is thereby enabled to continue the process of her self-creation, relating her past not, perhaps, as it actually was, but as it should have been; her voice, therefore, provides the materials for the construction of her identity.

It could, of course, be argued that this is precisely what Porter accomplished through the writing of fiction. Particularly in the Miranda stories, Porter re-fashions her own childhood to shape it into a form more compatible with her interior sense of self.

With this understanding of the inseparability of Rosaleen's (re)remembered past from her present identity, the true motive for her trip to Boston is clarified. Certainly Honora's condition has virtually nothing to do with her decision, but merely supplies a convenient, if bogus, excuse for her journey. Even Dennis recognizes this (123). Rosaleen's procrastination in locating Honora once she arrives in Boston is further evidence that this is not Rosaleen's intent in returning to Boston via New York (125). Rosaleen's true intention in undertaking the journey seems to be to fortify her connections with the past, to more fully claim the identity which she feels is consistent with her sense of self and to escape, if only temporarily, the life which she feels is contradictory to that identity. What she experiences in the city, however, does not reify but radically revises her identity, moving her away from

being defined so extensively by her past and moving her towards a more contented acceptance of who she is now.

Not coincidentally, Rosaleen reaches the peak of her frustration with the disparity between self-perception and outward reality during the winter. This dead season, with its insulative snow and forced dormancy, intensifies her sense of isolation and stasis, making her more desperate to regain the gaiety and vivacity which are central to her self-definition. The only thing that moves in this bleak landscape is time itself. When Rosaleen hurls the calendar into the fire, she graphically reveals her fear of the passage of time, which moves only forward, burying the past in a cold blank of memory (120). Dennis, by contrast, no longer looks at calendars (109), not because he is unaffected by time but because he is resigned to time's effects.

Rosaleen's choice of Boston and New York as the sites for her identity-bolstering mission is important in several ways. First Boston is the last known home of Honora, who, because she shared nearly every aspect of Rosaleen's identity-forming years, can best expedite Rosaleen's reclamation. Secondly, New York is the city of her youth, the locale for the spirited past which she meticulously preserves in her identity. It is also perhaps worth noting that Boston and New York were Kevin's intended destinations (109); to return to these places could be in some sense to

find him again. Both cities thus represent to her a happier past, so her romanticization of them is understandable. "It seemed a lucky sign she did not see a sad face anywhere. There was a cold sweet sunshine on the snow and the city people didn't look all frozen and bundled up. Their faces looked smooth after the gnarled raw frost-bitten country faces" (123). It is an early indicator of her later insight, however, that the city quickly drabs when set beside the ideal world of the theatre. "After the dancing warm lights of the screen the street was cold and dark and ugly, with the slush and the roar and the millions of people all going somewhere in a great rush, but not one face she knew" (124). This mental alteration of the landscape initiates Rosaleen's own process of change; though she is not yet conscious of it, Rosaleen later realizes that the ideal serves only to make the actual appear undesirable; the ideal is always remote and unattainable and hence unreal. For now, however, she still wants to re-live an idealized past, as is evidenced by her response to the actors in the romance film, "The Prince of Love," whom she cannot truly imagine as existing apart from their idealized roles. She tells herself that "these two were really alive and looked just like that, but it was hard to believe living beings could be so beautiful" (124). Quite clearly, it is this same unwillingness to make the ideal real by taking it out of its idealized context that makes Rosaleen avoid returning to her

old flat; although she has time to see two full-length romance films, she cannot find the time to return to the flat of her youth, though it is only "a turn around the block" (123).

Possibly the same fear causes Rosaleen to procrastinate in finding Honora's apartment and to resent her for ruining her trip. Ironically, though, the change in Rosaleen's identity is effected by not finding Honora and by having the boy she thought was Kevin take on, so to speak, a different Hugh. For when Rosaleen is unable to locate Honora, she gradually comes to understand that the past too is gone and leaves no forwarding address. Rosaleen's comment to Hugh that she has "'come a long way for nothing'" (126) contains more truth than she knows, for she has come to retrieve the past, and the past, as an actual, living force, does not exist and thus cannot serve as a foundation for her identity. When Hugh horribly misconstrues her character and intentions, sending her once-solid and orderly identity into confusion, Rosaleen's transition from one foundation to another is nearly complete. She "[wants] to be home and nowhere else" (219).

Once Rosaleen returns home, the shift which has occurred in her self-definition becomes more marked. Her disorienting encounter with Hugh cannot by itself explain why "the trip to Boston seemed to have gone out of her mind entirely" (130). The city, which only a few days earlier

was considered perfectly compatible with her identity, is now described as a threat to her very existence. "'I was scared for my life the whole time'" (130), Rosaleen remarks, and certainly her experiences while in the city have contributed to her feelings of disintegration and disconnection. Rosaleen now seems intent on centering her identity around her life with Dennis rather than on her past as a popular belle. Rosaleen spends her first moments upon her return organizing her kitchen and "putting things to rights," a sort of ordering of the space where her identity is now to reside.

The most telling indicator of her changed identity, however, is her altered voice. Since Rosaleen's voice through storytelling was her principal means of vitalizing the past and of integrating that past into her sense of identity, her movement from the past as a determinant of her identity surely has an effect on her voice. Thus when Rosaleen returns home, she does not speak of her trip but is instead "full of homecoming" (130), emphasizing the new center for her identity. Likewise, her only mention of her past after her return concerns, appropriately, ghosts, indicating that the real for Rosaleen now resides not in the past but in the present.

Though her voice is altered, however, it is not diminished, as is evident in Rosaleen's confrontation with her native neighbor. Taken aback by the woman's

accusations, which so closely resemble Hugh's earlier remarks, Rosaleen cannot at first manage a response. Quickly, however, her voice returns, combative and strong but not defensive, for Rosaleen values the power of her voice too intensely to "'waste'" her words on this woman (131). Significantly, Rosaleen uses words to restore order to her fractured identity: she muses out loud that "'life is a dream'" and "the thought and the words pleased her" (132). In this phrase is a recognition that all can seem false (as her stories seemed to Dennis, as Hugh's and the woman's accusations seem to Rosaleen, and as her own dreams are beginning to seem to her), but if she possesses a certainty about herself which comes from within, external circumstances and attitudes become innocuous. "Well, let them talk. Let them. She knew in her heart what she was, and Dennis knew, and that was enough" (132).

It is a particular strength of the story that it ends somewhat ambivalently, for it suggests that change is not a simple matter of decision. Porter, through the ambivalence expressed by Rosaleen, shows that change is a process rather than an act, that no change is an entire abandonment of what came before, but a reprioritizing of those influences. Finally, change in any form or degree is frightening because it is unsettling, because it involves looking at the self in a new way.

Nowhere is this ambivalence and fear more clearly expressed than in Rosaleen's final glance into the cracked looking-glass. Rosaleen's comfortable feeling of integration is interrupted by the sound of Guy Richards' wagon approaching the house. Rosaleen's immediate response is to adjust her hair, revealing the depth of her investment in her image of herself as young and attractive; this time, when she turns to the looking-glass, her identity in transition, she sees the glass' distortions and is unable to unify the face it reflects as fragments. Previously, by contrast, she could look beyond the glass' imperfections and know that the face it reflected was not the real self she knew herself to be. At least for this moment, she wants a glass that will do the integrating for her, and she regrets that she forgot to buy a new looking-glass while in the city. As suggested earlier, however, her forgetting the glass may reveal an unconscious desire to continue depending on her own view of herself rather than a literal representation. If so, the implication is that Rosaleen will eventually be able to move beyond this panicked moment and once more see herself as a unified identity.

This, in fact, does occur only a page later. Sitting alone with Dennis after Richards passes without stopping, Rosaleen puts in a new and almost literal perspective the influences upon her identity. Those most real to her and

felt are "here," while those with decreasing influence fade against a diminishing horizon:

Here in the lamplight sat Dennis and the cats, beyond in the darkness and snow lay Winston and New York and Boston, and beyond that were far off places full of life and gayety she'd never seen nor even heard of, and beyond everything like a green field with morning sun on it lay youth and Ireland as if they were something she had dreamed, or made up in a story. (134)

Ultimately, in other words, Rosaleen eventually chooses the real over the ideal because it can be lived, because it includes relationships and distinguishable voices, a contrast to the meaningless "roar" and the (e)strange(d) faces of the crowd in the city. The story ends with Rosaleen leaning upon Dennis, further distancing the peripheries of her vision. Dennis is no longer envisioned as a man of heroic stature: his chest protectors are not shining armor, but only knitted insulators against the cold. Neither does Rosaleen see herself as the desirable woman of her youth, coyly casting off the men who pursue her; instead, she is now a woman who seeks relation and needs her connection with Dennis to affirm her identity.

It is, of course, not an entirely affirmative vision, yet it allows Rosaleen the integration of identity that she, as well as Porter's other female protagonists previously discussed, actively seeks. Rosaleen is like Porter's other female characters in that she has a need to feel unified and integrated, this integration forming a solid, central core of identity. She is unlike them in that she demonstrates

Rosaleen's case, it is difficult to judge which of her identities is more successful: the former more fully emphasizes Rosaleen's voice, which possibly allows her a greater subjectivity, yet it lacks an intimate relationality and of course is not rooted in present actuality; the latter is truer and more immediate and is centered on connection with another, yet perhaps objectifies Rosaleen through her dependence upon Dennis to affirm her sense of being. It is perhaps not as important to qualitatively compare the bases of Rosaleen's identity as it is to recognize "The Cracked Looking-Glass" as a positive move towards the more flexible and inclusive sense of identity that Porter explores in the Miranda stories. For in the last of these stories, "Holiday," Miranda alone of all Porter's female characters is allowed to move fully beyond the objectification and negative relationality which determines the identities of her other women; only she gives expression to an identity which realizes her full potential as a woman.

Notes

¹ Porter, Katherine Anne. The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979: 39. Further references to this work will be cited in the text.

² Givner, Joan, ed. Katherine Anne Porter: Conversations. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1987: 64. Further references to this work will be cited in the text as ConvP.

³ DeMouy seems to vacillate in the way she views Laura's identity. She contends that Laura is attracted by the revolution's potential to effect a change in her identity, which suggests that she sees Laura's self as mutable and receptive of new possibilities; yet she also refers to

Laura's idealism and virginity as the elements which comprise an "essential self"--a term which seems very similar to the core identity that I see Laura as possessing (115-16).

* Porter seems to have shared Laura's disillusionment with the Mexican Revolution. In an interview with Henry Allen, Porter spoke of the discrepancy between ideals and realities: "'Of course I had seen all that [the discrepancies] in Mexico, the revolutionaries, good ones and bad ones. Zapata and Vela, they tore Mexico apart. The poor stayed poor. They redistributed the land and it's all back in the hands of the rich landowners. We don't learn anything. I have seen it all. Everything is promised and nothing is fulfilled.'" (ConvP 167)

* Judie Hatchett argues that Laura rejects others' definitions of her, but can provide no definition for herself (159). While it seems very true that Laura does not, in fact, know herself, it does not seem accurate to say that she refuses others' definitions. As I argue here, she instead welcomes their definitions and their objectification of her because it absolves her of the responsibility of knowing herself.

* Jane Krause DeMouy believes that Porter often uses two women to represent two sides of one woman. In "Maria Concepcion," she thus sees Maria Rosa as representing a female love principle which battles for supremacy over Maria Concepcion's aggressive independence (Pomegranates 33-35). Yet there is little evidence to suggest that the "female love principle" is part of Maria Concepcion's identity or that Maria Concepcion struggles against--or for--its expression in herself. This aspect seems to lie entirely outside Maria Concepcion, embodied only in Maria Rosa. Furthermore, neither does Maria Concepcion seem to me to possess independence or an aggressive nature, as I have tried to show; she is only aggressive at one point, in her murder of Maria Rosa, and in this context it can hardly be construed as an admirable trait.

* Perhaps Maria Concepcion's recognition of the power of the word is another reason she immediately turns to religion as a means of reintegrating her self. Christ's role as Logos, the word made flesh and the original word of creation, speaking a shapeless void into order and completion, would naturally have a great appeal to Maria Concepcion in her disoriented state.

* Writing to Mr. Dashiell, editor of Scribner's Magazine, Porter commented, "Yesterday I ran across a copy of Ulysses and saw again that phrase of Joyce's which had stuck in my mind: about the Art of Ireland being 'the Cracked Looking

Glass of a Servant.' I had remembered the word as Mirror, and so have called my story 'The Cracked Mirror' when it should be 'The Cracked Looking-Glass.'"

" DeMouy suggests that Rosaleen's garrulousness is a substitute for sex and that language becomes a replacement for her body's creativity. Rosaleen fears, DeMouy contends, that if she stops her stories, she will lose her (sexual) appeal to Guy (Pomegranates 139, 144).

CHAPTER 3 THE MIRANDA STORIES

The Miranda stories are an entirely different realm of Porter's fiction, different primarily because they describe a region, its people, and their circumstances which were for Porter not wholly fictional. Although Porter wrote of the South in texts other than the Miranda stories, the characters and their class in these other texts were antithetical with what Porter wanted to associate with herself. In fact, as Joan Givner points out, Porter repeatedly disavowed any connection between her own experience of the South and the portrayal given, for example, in "Noon Wine" or "He" (Life 76-77). Though in actuality the common, destitute farm class of these stories more closely approximated Porter's own circumstances, she willfully aligned herself instead with the aristocratic, cultured, and massive Gay family of the Miranda stories. So entire was her identification with this world that she often spoke of the stories as autobiographical and of Miranda as a representation of herself.

Understandably, then, Porter's investment in these stories was great. This perhaps accounts for why the women of these stories have a somewhat more pronounced subjectivity and almost certainly explains why Miranda is

nearly the only one of all her female characters who moves entirely beyond objectification, negative relationality, and convention and approaches Welty's sense of plural identity. Miranda's growth, however, is accomplished only through the rejection of what Porter regards as specifically southern codes, codes which limit and define the other women of these stories to greater or lesser degrees.'

Porter does not explicitly involve the issue of southern convention in her other southern stories--"He," "Rope," and "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall"--perhaps because the social class of the women in these stories was not preoccupied with the image of the southern lady. She does, however, have her protagonists in the stories confront their roles as wives and mothers, the two expected roles for women, to a degree that her other female protagonists do not.

As argued previously, Porter's vision of the South is, for most of her women, not ultimately affirmative, as it was not for herself. Thus, even strong characters such as Sophia Jane, Nannie, or Cousin Eva remain partially restricted by southern codes and roles for women.

Two critics in particular regard Miranda as having no positive female role models. Jane Flanders claims that "Miranda will never know the 'truth about herself' because she cannot reconcile her need to express her own identity with any acceptable model of mature womanhood; she has never

known one" (60). This, she says, is due to the fact that Porter herself lacked positive female influences (50).

Margaret Bolsterli similarly contends that Miranda can never achieve independence because the only model provided for her was that of the ideal southern lady--"an ideal of feminine beauty and charm which, though unachievable for her, was so desirable that there was no acceptable alternative to it" ("Bound' Characters" 97).

Flanders' statement is particularly ironic given the fact that her view of Sophia Jane is an especially affirmative one: she sees Sophia Jane as moving beyond southern convention into an independent existence. While acknowledging the strengths of Sophia Jane, however, Flanders is too easily dismissive of them, finally concluding that her gains are not transmitted to Miranda (55). Bolsterli makes a similar argument, claiming that Sophia Jane, by successfully combining beauty and independence, is a potential role model for Miranda; however, Bolsterli contends, because Sophia Jane "still believes in the feminine ideal," she "denies the value of independence" and thus negates her positive influence (99). Both critics, however, are too reductive in their assessments of Sophia Jane's--and the other female family members'--influence upon Miranda. For, in the ways in which they do create new possibilities for themselves as women, they enable Miranda, through their example, to achieve a

fuller sense of female identity for herself than they themselves are able to possess.

One of the most formidable southern preoccupations that the Gay women struggle within and against is the tendency towards romanticization. Largely a male obsession in which some of the women invest, the practice takes two basic forms: idealization of the past and pedestalling of women. Sophia Jane and Nannie and to a smaller extent, Eva, participate in the former. The latter, because it constructs a false, static, and composite identity for women, is questioned by all the women and actively rebelled against--with different levels of success--by most. This same preoccupation is, of course, one with which Porter herself struggled, appropriating the romantic image of the southern belle and recalling a charming and Gay past for herself which had never actually existed; concomitantly, however, she abandoned the South and strove to present herself on other occasions as an intellectual, worldly woman who had rejected southern roles and conventions. Miranda's confusion in attempting to distinguish between fact and fiction, then, may in fact mirror Porter's own uncertainty about which identity she wished to assume for herself. The Miranda stories themselves, fictional in form though not in feeling, further convolute the definitions of romance and reality which "Old Mortality" in particular emphasizes.

These southern conventions, codes, and roles from which Miranda gradually extricates herself, however, during her childhood mold the core of her identity through her emulation of or dependence upon those women who most embody the pattern of the South. Nearly all the women of these stories have a core identification with the South's roles and conventions, and though they are able to revise and expand the dimensions of their roles, the structures themselves remain largely intact. Only Nannie, later in life, and Great-Aunt Eliza create wholly different possibilities for themselves through disregarding southern conventions which define, respectively, black women and southern ladies. Both unquestionably have distinct influences upon Miranda's own choices. Yet the single most crucial influence upon Miranda's development is Sophia Jane, the Grandmother of the stories, designated as "The Source" in the opening chapter of "The Old Order."

Sophia Jane shares with the women in the stories previously discussed a strong drive toward integration of identity, an urge for order which privileges constancy and predictability and creates a core of being that centers, in Sophia Jane's case, upon established roles and codes and, more positively, relationality. Not surprisingly, therefore, in the first portrait of Sophia Jane which Porter composed, she is depicted as undertaking a cyclical journey to restore order to her country home, the cycle continued

upon her return to the home in town, which has "no doubt . . . gone somewhat astray in her absence" (325). Though she claims to be motivated towards this order by her need for change (321), the journey better illustrates the immutable pattern of her existence. The restoration she effects is all-inclusive, significantly involving interiors and concealed centers as well as broader exteriors, revealing Sophia Jane's belief that order must extend even, and perhaps especially, to the cores of things. Thus barrels are opened to examination, corners and cracks are scrutinized, mattresses are emptied of their contents, cleaned and refilled, and all quilts "brought to light" (325) from a dark corner of disorder. Most interesting is Porter's suggestion that this ordering reaffirms a woman's power and control. This is shown through Sophia Jane's dusting off of the "old" and "shabby" volumes of exclusively male writers known for their authoritative, masculinist accounts and definitions--"Dickens, Scott, Thackeray, Dr. Johnson's dictionary, the volumes of Pope and Milton and Dante and Shakespeare" (324)--only to "close [them] up carefully again" (324) in the locked exile of the roll top desks. In marked contrast to the closed stuffiness of the study is the kitchen, "no longer dingy and desolate but a place of heavenly order where it was tempting to linger" (324). What is lost through this being a conventional

female domain is more than made up for by the relationality and integration this room provides.

Clearly, Sophia Jane keeps and controls this order for herself, undoubtedly because it provides her with a personal sense of integration and wholeness, a steadiness reflected in her changeless eyes: "Grandmother's eyes were always the same. They never looked kind or sad or angry or tired or anything. They just looked, blue and still" (357). To ensure that a core sense of identity prevails both for herself and, as will later be shown, for her offspring as well, Sophia Jane establishes an order that is grounded in convention, yet convention which has been altered and reshaped by Sophia Jane's own definitions, values, and most importantly, her own construction of the past, present, and future. Even her young grandchildren recognize Sophia Jane's insistence that "'it must be done this way, and no other!'" (354). Her willful ordering can be seen in the particular as well as in the expansive: she can, therefore, urge that Miranda "'call things by their right names'" (353) and name the farm Cedar Grove--her choice since it reflects the preservative, sheltering qualities which she associates with the place--and deny Harry's definition of it as Halifax, or hell. More significant because it is more essential to Sophia Jane's core sense of self and to her internal order is her restructuring of her history to extend

beyond the confines of the past, a practice shared with Nannie.

They talked about the past, really--always about the past. Even the future seemed like something gone and done with when they spoke of it. It did not seem an extension of their past, but a repetition of it. They would agree that nothing remained of life as they had known it, the world was changing swiftly, but by the mysterious logic of hope they insisted that each change was probably the last; or if not, a series of changes might bring them, blessedly, back full-circle to the old ways they had known. (327)

The circularity explicit in their vision suggests an implicit center, a core formed from the endless re-evocation of the past into the future; the fact that Sophia Jane regards the future not as an extension of her past (thus establishing it as linear and potentially limited) but as a repetition enunciates more fully the continued vitality and applicability of the past: it does not usurp but augments the future. Thus, Sophia Jane does not, as Judie Hatchett suggests, possess a false idea of herself by maintaining an identity of the past without accepting the present (98). Instead, she brings the past into the present to enrich the latter.

Sophia Jane and Nannie's shared view of the past is particularly affirmative when contrasted with Uncle Jimbilly's disconnection from time and relationality: "He muttered perpetually to himself, his blue mouth always moving in an endless disjointed comment on things past and present, and even to come, no doubt, though there was

nothing about him that suggested any connection with even the nearest future . . ." (350--emphases mine).

Additionally, Uncle Jimbilly's "remembered" past is not personally experienced, but general and almost stereotypical, based on horror stories of slavery's abuses which Jimbilly himself has never known, since he has been part of the Gay family since childhood (333). Judith Fetterley concurs, referring to Jimbilly's "testimony" as "hearsay" evidence. "His indirect narration, his refusal to talk straight, reflects his inauthenticity" (13). Neither, of course, is his version of the past positive or enriching, as are the shared memories of Sophia Jane and Nannie, but brutal and demeaning.

The patchwork quilts which Sophia Jane and Nannie jointly and tirelessly make become the perfect representations for Sophia Jane's integrated identity and her unique re-construction of her/story. Salvaging scraps of material evidently from clothing worn by the women of the family in years past, Sophia Jane and Nannie shape and rearrange fragmented female pasts, including their own, into a whole of their own creation. While not ignoring the pain of the past, as is suggested by the "running briar stitch" (326--emphasis mine) which connects the pieces, they nevertheless can give the past a beautifully complete female re-interpretation which includes relationality and pattern.

This capability is culminated late in life for Sophia Jane.

Not until she was in middle age, her husband dead, her property dispersed, and she found herself with a houseful of children, making a new life for them in another place, with all the responsibilities of a man but with none of the privileges, did she finally emerge into something like an honest life: and yet she was passionately honest. She had never been anything else. (336)

As Carolyn Heilbrun points out, late life independence is a common circumstance for women; released from most social and gender expectations and more confident in their individual worth, Heilbrun argues that women experience a new strength in older age which is seldom acknowledged in life or in literature (124, 127).

Yet it is reductive to regard Sophia Jane's independence and willfulness as only originating after her husband's death, or as developed from circumstances rather than from Sophia Jane's initiative, as both Margaret Bolsterli ("Bound' Characters" 99) and Shirley Scott (51) contend. As the passage above suggests through its own deconstruction (only then "did she finally emerge into something like an honest life: and yet she was passionately honest"), Sophia Jane demonstrates a pronounced subjectivity throughout her life, though it is admittedly allowed fuller expression after her husband's death. Jane Flanders helps elucidate this truth by examining the line which precedes this passage: "[s]he lived her whole youth so, without once giving herself away." Flanders points out the double

meaning of this sentence's final phrase and concludes that it is Sophia Jane's refusal to sell her self out entirely to southern expectations that allows her to live honestly.

"Life had been a battle from which Sophia Jane had emerged triumphant, but she did not win that battle by remaining submissive to any code of genteel femininity" (52). Judith Fetterley disagrees with this assessment and characterizes Sophia Jane as living a dishonest life because she adheres to values and roles that she detests (11).

The most accurate representation of Sophia Jane perhaps lies between these two positions. As a young woman, Sophia Jane is aware of the discontinuity which exists between the southern convention to which she is expected to adhere and what is earlier called her "implicit character" (334): "her deadlly willfulness, her certainty that her feelings were important, even in the lightest matter, and must not be tampered with or treated casually" (335).

Driven by her need for order, for a stable, integrated core of identity, Sophia Jane attempts to mend the disjunction through subjugating her personal willfulness to encoded roles. For, ironically, at this point in her life, it is her personal subjectivity which is most disturbing to Sophia Jane, which seems frighteningly out-of-bounds. By contrast, convention, with its rigidly defined expectations and established roles, can provide the security which Sophia Jane depends upon for an integrated sense of self. It is

not an easy subjugation, however. Often, as will be shown, Sophia Jane questions these conventions and at times refuses their limitations, ultimately enabling a reversal of her previous attitude. Eventually, that is, it is southern convention which becomes more disturbing to Sophia Jane, and her subjectivity which becomes the stronger integrative force. Though she never entirely dismantles the structures of convention themselves, Sophia Jane does gain the confidence and self-possession to expand the boundaries which delineate her possibilities, to rely more on her own construction and definition of her identity, less regulated by convention.

The process of her efforts at integration, her struggle to maintain a solid core of being, is shown in "The Old Order" and "Old Mortality." Sophia Jane's early subjugation of her "implicit character" to the far more structured codes of her society is shown in the former: she carefully confines her independence, keeping it within the "bounds of wifely prudence" (335).

It is even implied that Sophia Jane regards her strength of character as an aberration, an unacceptable fluidity in the "fixed code" which she believes should provide the definition for herself as a woman.

They [Sophia Jane and Nannie] had questioned the burdensome rule they lived by every day of their lives, but without rebellion and without expecting an answer. This unbroken thread of inquiry in their minds contained no doubt as to the utter rightness and justice of the basic laws of human existence, founded as they were on God's plan; but

they wondered perpetually, with only a hint now and then to each other of the uneasiness of their hearts, how so much suffering and confusion could have been built up and maintained on such a foundation. The Grandmother's role was authority, she knew that[.] . . . Her own doubts and hesitations she concealed, also, she reminded herself, as a matter of duty. (328)

This quotation reveals the difficulty Sophia Jane faces in attempting to maintain an integrated sense of self within the southern tradition. Clearly, Sophia Jane has appropriated much of her culture's value system, yet she also retains a personal subjectivity which is at odds with the South's ideal for her. This same disjunction is seen in her disdain for the qualities she defines as male and which are antithetical to her own character. Doubtlessly, her disgust is largely owing to the fact that she recognizes in men an unreconciled--and untroubled--discrepancy between the standard they have established for themselves and their actual attributes. While claiming to be ambitious, practical, bold, and responsible, the men she knows demonstrate instead a lack of discipline, impracticality, timidity, and laziness (335).

Significantly, though she recognizes this discrepancy in men and despises the fact that men lack the subjectivity which she possesses, she cannot face or perhaps even recognize a similar disunity in herself. This is shown through her rejection of the "New Woman" and her refusal to see the New Woman's similarity to herself (333). Judith Fetterley regards Sophia Jane's blindness as a "distortion

of . . . perception" brought about by her "dishonest life"--covering her true feelings and real questions and living according to values and roles she does not believe in (12). Yet it cannot be so simple, because Sophia Jane does believe in many of the southern codes, has appropriated many of them for herself as a means of ordering her identity. Apparently her need for order outweighs her need to express her subjectivity, especially when expressing her subjectivity makes it difficult for her to live within her southern society. To openly display subjectivity is, to Sophia Jane, to "unsex" oneself, since it involves a rejection of the codes upon which Sophia Jane, at this point in her life, bases her feminine identity and usurps for women qualities that should (though they rarely do) characterize men. It is therefore not surprising that Sophia Jane allows the men in her family to destroy her financial security, despite her knowledge that she could handle the transactions more capably, for she has convinced herself that "her natural activities lay elsewhere, it was the business of a man to make all decisions and dispose of all financial matters" (337--emphasis mine).

A possible explanation for Sophia Jane's suppression of her subjectivity can be found in her response to her sexuality. Aware of the double standard which allows her future husband a sexual freedom forbidden to her, Sophia Jane envies his experience, vicariously and surreptitiously

living out "the sweet dark life of the knowledge of evil . . . the delicious, the free, the wonderful, the mysterious and terrible life of men" (335) by way of a vivid fantasy life. As real and as powerful as her sexual desire is, however, Sophia Jane believes it to be a dangerous and even destructive power; the repression of her sexuality affords her a greater power because her chastity, in the southern world in which she lives, is the foundation for her sense of herself as a woman. Her virginity is nearly the sole determinant of her marketability as wife, the only respectable role available to her as a woman, and is vital, therefore, to her continued existence within her culture. This truth is evident in the description of her sexual desire as something

which threatened now and again to cast her over the edge of some mysterious forbidden frenzy. She dreamed recurrently that she had lost her virginity (her virtue, she called it), her sole claim to regard, consideration, even to existence, and after frightful moral suffering which masked altogether her physical experience she would wake in a cold sweat, disordered and terrified. (335)

Clearly, Sophia Jane seeks to avoid the disorder and disintegration of identity which she fears will result from a freely-expressed sexuality. The same fear motivates the suppression of her subjectivity.

Marriage as an outlet for Sophia Jane's sexuality and as an identity-enriching relationship for Sophia Jane proves disillusioning. Though years later Sophia Jane claims that she "'wished with all [her] heart'" to marry her husband

(183), in the account of her courtship she seems indifferent at best (335), suggesting that she suspects even before marriage its inadequacy to provide her with the internal order she hopes to achieve from the role. Sophia Jane, however, compensates for "what she missed in the marriage bed" (334) and in her other relationships with her husband by heightening alternate relationships. Conventional enough to believe that her role as wife forces her to be "ruled" by her husband (337), her essential need for self-control leads her to structure her other relationships hierarchially, dispensing "matriarchal tyranny" (351) that her children both seek and abhor. Such matriarchal control, as Sophia Jane recognizes, is of course sanctioned by convention as well, enabling Sophia Jane to satisfy her need for order and control without breaking the boundaries of established codes: "The Grandmother's role was authority, she knew that; it was her duty to portion out activities, to urge or restrain where necessary, to teach morals, manners, and religion, to punish and reward her own household according to a fixed code" (328).

Yet, of course, Sophia Jane's relationships do not exist merely as outlets for her need for control. Her more essential motivation is a deeply-embedded desire for relationality, "an indefinable sense of homecoming, not to the house but to the black, rich soft land and the human beings living on it" (322). This "sense of family unity so

precious to the Grandmother" (339) is central to her individual identity. As the head of the family, Sophia Jane can exercise her subjectivity to an extent not possible in any other area of her life; it is almost exclusively through her roles as mother and grandmother that she cultivates the independence, determination, and courage that she possesses so strongly in her later life. Perhaps more importantly, within the unity of the family, a group that "belongs" together through strong ties of blood, Sophia Jane's personal identity can be confirmed and strengthened.²

Though her relationality extends to include non-family members as well, such as the black workers on her farm, her children and grandchildren are the recipients of her most intense love and of her most willful control. At first only a "grim and terrible race of procreation" (334), with the birth of her fourth child, maternity is transformed into an enriching relationship through Sophia Jane's choice to nurse Nannie's child and her own son Stephen herself rather than to find another wet nurse when Nannie falls ill. In so choosing, Sophia Jane, evidently for the first time, willfully rejects convention, even when the rejection requires opposing those who exercise the most control over her--her husband and her mother. This one act, therefore, is fraught with significance: it marks the beginning of her ever-increasing tendency to provide order and cohesiveness to her identity through exercising her personal

subjectivity. It reveals a will and control of self more powerful than convention, makes possible an intimate physical and emotional bond of relationship, and provides a personal and sensual source of pleasure for Sophia Jane. Jane Flanders concurs, noting that this decision--and her maternal function in general--give to Sophia Jane "a naturalness and a humanity which had been obscured in her highly artificial, genteel, slave-owning society" (53).

She had learned now that she was badly cheated in giving her children to another woman to feed; she resolved never again to be cheated in just that way. She sat nursing her child and her foster child, with a sensual warm pleasure she had not dreamed of, translating her natural physical relief into something holy, God-sent, amends from heaven for what she had suffered in childbed. Yes, and for what she missed in the marriage bed, for there also something had failed. (334)

Not even the relationships with her children, established and solidified by Sophia Jane's choice to nurse them, however, provide the constancy, order, and unity that she finds in her relationship with Nannie. Carolyn Heilbrun considers the community of women to be the most enriching of relationships, though female friendships are often inferiorized and precedence given to marital and maternal bonds (80). Both Sophia Jane and Nannie privilege their relationship, however, enabling it not only to survive their lifetimes, but possibly beyond, since Sophia Jane plans to be Nannie's "sponsor before the judgment seat" (337) and both hope to "pass [eternity] happily together" (328). Given the fact that Sophia Jane and Nannie transcend an

original master/slave relationship to arrive at this mutuality and intimacy, their accomplishment is even more profound.

To all those other than Sophia Jane, in fact, Nannie is not even given human identity, but is given second billing to animals--Sophia Jane's father is away "buying horses and Negroes" (330--emphasis mine). Worse yet, the description of Nannie as pot-bellied with stick arms is an inferior contrast to the pony bought for Sophia Jane, which has "a round, hard barrel of a body" (330). For Sophia Jane, however, Nannie almost immediately passes from being a "little monkey" to an individual with human identity. "Fiddler [her pony] did not wear well. She outgrew him in a year . . . [but] there was only one Nannie and she outwore Sophia Jane" (330). In an act that is to Sophia Jane simple and natural but to her family highly symbolic and near-sacrilege, Sophia Jane officially confirms Nannie's humanity and familial status by writing, with an ink that "sunk deeply into the paper," Nannie's name in the family Bible. Sophia Jane expresses her specific bond with Nannie by giving to Nannie her own birth year and last name, and the space closest to her, as slightly younger sister, in the Bible's geneology table. Her race becomes through this act a quite literally parenthetical afterthought, with the word black appearing after Nannie's name in parentheses (329). This indelible inclusion of Nannie in the family history

becomes "one of their pleasantest points of reference," a connection which is lived out.

It is unquestionably Sophia Jane's acceptance of her as a friend rather than as a slave or servant which allows Nannie to define herself as human, with individual worth and identity, not merely as "lagniappe" or "crowbait" (331). When others attempt to measure her worth by how much money she brought (331) or remember her as she was--"'the strip of crowbait I sold to your father for twenty dollars'" (332)--rather than what she has become, Nannie takes comfort in Sophia Jane's regard of her as a friend, worthy of respect. Even before emancipation is proclaimed, then, Nannie is able to regard slavery as only a word and not a condition: "She was wounded not so much by her state of being as by the word describing it" (336). Her "freedom," then, marks no change in her circumstances or even in her sense of herself, though it does make official her right to choose to remain with the family.

The full mutuality of Sophia Jane and Nannie's friendship is beautifully expressed through the silent language they share. Clearly the fluidity of their communication not only enriches their own relationship but serves as a centering point for their children and grandchildren as well. Their language becomes, for their offspring, the essence of life itself and Sophia Jane's room the area of confluence: "All the sounds of life in the

household seemed to converge there, echo, retreat, and return. Grandmother and Aunt Nannie knew the whole complicated code of sounds, could interpret and comment on them by an exchange of glances, a lifted eyebrow, or a tiny pause in their talk" (327).

That this quality of communication and rapport is a distinctly female capability for Porter may be suggested by Porter's implicit contrast of the women's voice with Uncle Jimbilly's, especially since no other male voice is considered in any of the Miranda stories. The intimate relationality, the clarity, the cyclical vitality of Sophia Jane and Nannie's language contrasts sharply with the fragmented incoherency of Jimbilly's speech. "Uncle Jimbilly would talk in a low, broken, abstracted murmur, as if to himself; but he was really saying something he meant one to hear. . . . Nothing could have been more impersonal and faraway than his tone and manner of talking" (341). Sophia Jane and Nannie's intuitive rapport reaffirms the complementary and mutually necessary nature of their relationship; hence, "all their lives together it was not so much a question of affection between them as a simple matter of being unable to imagine getting on without each other" (330), while Jimbilly remains "lonely as a wandering spirit and almost as invisible" (350).

The closeness of their relationship, however, does not discount Nannie's identity independent from Sophia Jane. As

stated earlier, Nannie "outwears" Sophia Jane, and her existence beyond her is characterized by a subjectivity, independence, and freedom from roles that Sophia Jane is never able to entirely realize for herself. Not surprisingly, the family who remains in Nannie's old age continues to regard her patronizingly (or patrinizingly) as a slave, thus denying her personhood and independent desires. Ironically, they consider her part of the family only because they find it impossible to imagine Nannie existing for any other purpose than to meet their needs and to give them a sense of wholeness.

It was astonishing to discover that Nannie had always liked and hoped to own certain things, she had seemed so contented and wantless. . . . The children, brought up in an out-of-date sentimental way of thinking, had always complacently believed that Nannie was a real member of the family, perfectly happy with them . . . (349)

Significantly, it is not Nannie but the family members whose identities fragment and suffer a sense of displacement when Nannie moves out of the "big house" into "a room of her own."

They were growing up, times were changing, the old world was sliding from under their feet, they had not yet laid hold of the new one. They missed Nannie every day. . . . They realized how much the old woman had done for them, simply by seeing how, almost immediately after she went, everything slackened, lost tone, went off edge. (349-50)

Nannie's response is not a rejection of her relation to them as much as it is a cultivation and affirmation of her selfhood. Thus when the children assure her of their love,

Nannie is indifferent to their professions--"she did not care whether they loved her or not" (348)--not because she de-values their connection with her but because she denies the necessity of their love to her sense of worth and identity. Her visits "home" are far more for the family's sake than for her own, allowing them to regard her momentarily as "the amiable, dependent, like-one-of-the-family old servant" (350), a role which she now manipulates to gain more for herself.

On her own, Nannie discards the domestic and feminized uniform of her servant role, replacing it with more casual and comfortable garb. She withdraws from the white world, from their definitions of her, and becomes more of herself. In this context, the fact that she has no mixed blood is important, for it allows her to fully retrieve her exclusive blackness, a movement inward which is reflected in her eyes, in which "the black iris of the deep, withdrawn old eyes turned a chocolate brown and seemed to spread over the whole surface of the eyeball" (349). As she becomes more and more the "aged Bantu woman of independent means, sitting on the steps, breathing the free air" (349), her eyes, the windows of the soul, become even more unfathomable to the whites around her: "the eyelids crinkled and drew in, so that her face was like an eyeless mask" (349). Yet despite Nannie's inexplicability (or perhaps because of it), whites "who had never owned a soul related to Nannie" (349) are drawn to

her, quite possibly because they recognize they do not own a soul related to Nannie's; they yearn to possess for themselves the spirit they see embodied in Nannie.

Importantly, Nannie's retreat into her core identity involves her distancing not only from the white world but from black connections as well, emphasizing the exclusivity of her introspection and the ability of her femaleness to survive even without the roles which often define Woman. For example, she rejects her husband, Jimbilly, claiming that there "'Taint no more [room] than just enough fo' me'" (351). Unlike Sophia Jane, who was obliged, through her adherence to convention, to wait until her husband's death for their marriage to end and at that point to come into a fuller sense of her independent identity, Nannie's marriage to Jimbilly "dissolves" of itself, by tacit and mutual agreement, when its purpose--procreation--is fulfilled. Now, years later, when Jimbilly seeks a woman's care and provision which is "rightfully" due him as a husband, Nannie unequivocally denies his claim upon her. Secure in her own strength, Nannie becomes her own "man," wearing a bandana instead of her old "white ruffled mobcap" and smoking a pipe (349), believing now that the days and nights exist only for her pleasure.

If Nannie and even Sophia Jane can arrive at a reality in their older age which permits them a broader subjectivity, it is a possibility not permitted to Amy,

Sophia Jane's daughter, partially because of her early death but more importantly because of her romantic "fictionalization" by the members of her family. "Old Mortality," the text in which Amy's story appears, is preoccupied with the distinctions between romance and reality and almost certainly reflects Porter's own difficulty in reconciling the two in her own life. Ironically, however, Amy struggles against the fictionalization of her life by others, wanting her reality to be recognized, while Porter, of course, rejected the realities of her life in favor of a self-created fiction. Amy fights for the write of her own creation if she must be "'the heroine of a novel'" (189), and for the re-delineation of the boundaries of her role as belle. Jane Krause DeMouy sees this as a powerful position. According to DeMouy, Amy's family regards her as having no control over men's reactions to her, yet Amy is aware of her power and uses it to her advantage ("Face to Face" 130). Porter, of course, through her creation of this and the other Miranda texts, not only re-created her own past through the fiction, but exercised ultimate creative power over her characters by inventing them and their circumstances. Amy is only marginally successful in her battle for subjectivity and voice, exploiting and expanding the definition of southern belle, but not abandoning it, at times seizing the pen to

inscribe herself, yet largely succumbing to others'
(pre/in)scription.'

Not coincidentally, Amy is repeatedly associated with art forms--so consistently that they become a more appropriate representation of her life than her reality, which remains obscure even after a variety of perspectives, including Amy's own, are given of her life. That "Old Mortality" begins only after Amy's death, when her reality has been converted to memory and that the "Old Mortality" of the title refers to Amy, specifically alluding to a line from a tombstone poem written about her, make Amy's relegation to lifeless art and unreality immediately apparent. Appropriately, then, the story opens not with a description of Amy, but of a photograph of her, yet this distinction is not explicit until the third sentence, thus establishing the story's blurring of the boundaries between real and unreal. In fact, however, the opening description can be argued to be an accurate representation of Amy's life--not her interior reality, but what she was forced to be: she is "forever in [a] pose . . . a motionless image" confined in a frame, a still life that blends aesthetically with the "vase of flowers and draped velvet curtains" (173). Ironically, the very young Miranda, her name suggesting the vision of which she is capable, is able to recognize that there is no real, living Amy who remains, and she intuitively associates this representation with fiction:

"The woman in the picture had been Aunt Amy, but she was only a ghost in a frame, and a sad, pretty story from old times" (173--emphases mine). The adult members of the family also deny the reality of the representation, but because it does not coincide with their memories of Amy, which they erroneously believe to be real and infallible. Thus, this opening image of "Old Mortality"--and in fact the entire text--show Miranda's growing awareness that her family cannot give the "framework" to her life; she must create her own life by integrating the past, present, and future, as Suzanne Bunkers points out (83).

Miranda is perceptive enough at age nine to recognize that there are three classifications of literature which can equally be applied to life and to memory:

life, which was real and earnest, and the grave was not its goal; poetry, which was true but not real; and stories . . . in which things happened as nowhere else, with the most sublime irrelevance and unlikelihood, and one need not turn a hair, because there was not a word of truth in them.
(194)

To Miranda, as for Amy before her, life is more than simple existence, the opposite of death--it must include experience, passion, and pleasure to be truly real. Thus Amy does not guard her health because she knows that to do so would only extend a passionless life and diminish the living, as her response to her mother indicates: "'You might live as long as anyone, if only you will be sensible.' 'That's the whole trouble,' said Amy" (182). To her nurse,

who writes to Sophia Jane that Amy "'could not get well but she might have lived longer'" (193) or to Eva, who notes that "'if they had made her take proper care of herself, if she had been nursed sensibly, she might have been alive today'" (215) existence is perhaps enough, but for Amy it was not. Miranda, at eighteen, recounting family stories with Cousin Eva, is undecided: "Why did [Eva] hate Aunt Amy so, when Aunt Amy was dead and she alive? Wasn't being alive enough?" (215) Just hours after their conversation, having returned to a family that she no longer feels a part of, Miranda determines that existence alone was not enough for Amy, nor is it for her.

Notably, both Sophia Jane and Eva connect existence with sensibleness, suggesting that the latter must necessarily be the condition or state of the former. Amy, however, rejects this requirement as being limiting of the passion with which she must live life. Though her brothers regard her as sensible (183), their opinion is based only on Amy's deference to them and disregards the reality of Amy's often quite capricious choices. Yet her efforts to reject "sensibleness," to live life with passion and vigor, are ultimately doomed, as her escapade to the Mexican border to say farewell to Harry attests (189). Though itself a flouting of expectations and a willful enactment of her subjectivity, still she only follows a male lead, and when

she arrives at the border, she cannot cross over but must return home--incapacitated if exhilarated.

As this episode and several others illustrate, for Amy the grave is to be the inescapable end of her life, and, if suicide is Amy's final choice, the "goal" as well. What tuberculosis does not inhibit and restrict of life, convention, roles, and social expectations do. Life, in its fullest and most real sense, is not available to Amy; instead, as Miranda recognizes, Amy is relegated to the world of poetry, which is "true but not real." As a youth Miranda regards poetry--the realm where what should be true takes precedence over what is--as infinitely preferable to real life, which she associates with "their everyday world of dull lessons to be learned, stiff shoes to be limbered up, scratchy flannels to be endured in cold weather, measles and disappointed expectations" (178). Amy, however, who "belong[s] to the world of poetry" (178--emphasis mine), knows that poetic conventions also involve "dull lessons" and "disappointed expectations" and are as stifling and inflexible in their own way as Miranda's stiff shoes are in another. Miranda's comparison of Amy's life to the poetry of Edgar Allan Poe (178) hints at this, given that for Poe the ideal subject of poetry was a beautiful, dead or dying woman. Perhaps it is also no coincidence that Poe was a southern poet, since it is the specifically southern role of

the belle, with its socially necessitated culmination in marriage, which Amy is most confined within.

Significantly, Amy never refers to her own existence as poetic, but frames it in the language of fiction, declaring "'And if I am to be the heroine of this novel, why shouldn't I make the most of it?'" (189) Amy's response reveals her resignation to her role and her belief in its inevitability; it also displays her intention to inscribe her own movement, but largely within the convention. She, in effect, allows herself mostly only an editing capacity, not a creative one. Most importantly, however, Amy's comment shows that she regards her life as untrue as well as unreal, since in stories "things happened as nowhere else, with the most sublime irrelevance and unlikelihood, and one need not turn a hair, because there was not a word of truth in them" (194). Miranda calls stories "forbidden reading matter" as historically for women they were, ironically because of the romantic view of life men believed novels encouraged women to have. Amy is a text who is read solely for her romantic content; what is "forbidden reading matter" is the actuality of her individual identity, which no one will acknowledge or allow expression.

For example, after the scandal involving Amy and Raymond at the masked ball, Amy's own feelings regarding it are barely considered; instead, it is regarded as a "blow" to a core family identity, and they brace themselves "in a

shared tension as if all their nerves began at a common center. This center had received a blow, and family nerves shuddered, even into the farthest reaches of Kentucky" (189). It is quite possible that Amy created the scandal in order to draw attention to her own needs and desires, and if so, it is particularly ironic that the family regards it as a communal attack; Amy's response when Gabriel asks if Raymond kissed her, "'Maybe he did . . . and maybe I wished him to'" (188), reveals the primacy she gives to her own desires and her own need for escape from the confining expectations of her role as a woman.

Yet for all of Amy's insistence upon her belle identity as a fiction, with her personal reality unacknowledged by others, her family persists in viewing her as a poetic ideal, which is a "true" projection, if the truth were known, of their own identity needs. The actual indistinguishability of poetry and fiction, unrecognized by the family at large but vaguely realized by Miranda, is shown through her subtle equation of the two. Miranda notes, for example, that the family "love[s] to tell stories, romantic and poetic" and describes "patching together as well as they could fragments of tales that were like bits of poetry or music, indeed were associated with the poetry they had heard or read" (175 and 176--emphases mine). If it is Amy's desire to convince them of the veracity of this equation, the ultimate unreality and

untruthfulness of their image of her, she herself makes it difficult for others to read her correctly by being unable--perhaps even unwilling--to fully extricate herself from the inscribed page.

Though her life is a fiction, in other words, she does largely accept her role as the "heroine." Thus it seems too reductive to claim, as Jane Flanders does, that Amy is freed by "her supremacy as a coquette," (though Flanders does admit that Amy's behavior is ultimately responsible for her own ruin) [51]. It is perhaps more accurate to conclude that Amy encourages her own objectification while simultaneously struggling against the very limitations to which she herself contributes.

At times, however, Amy becomes the word made flesh, not a typed character on the page. Through several bold moves, Amy attempts to pronounce her subjectivity, her rejection of the codes which define her as an object of art. Cutting her hair, which is a major feature in the family's formula for female beauty (176), is one of her most dramatic acts, clearly intended to illustrate her willful disregard for the "points of beauty" and of male desire. Whether or not it is true, then, it is nonetheless significant that Amy claims that it was Raymond's compliment on her bobbed haircut that initiated the scandal at the masked ball, since it both reiterates the scandalousness of her "willful mutilat[ion]"

(183) and shows Amy's preference for a man who appreciates her subjectivity.

The same ball provides another opportunity for a display of Amy's will. In what appears to be a direct challenge of her conversion into an art object by her family, Amy patterns her costume after that of a Dresden china shepherdess figurine which occupies a place on the family's mantel. By throwing off the mantle of her family's illusion of her and by giving life and reality to a still and chaste object of art, Amy dares her family to renounce their objectification of her through confronting them with the contradictions of their values. Seeing Amy as the embodiment of the art he had previously accepted without reservation, her father

[falls] into a frenzy of outraged propriety. 'It's disgraceful,' he pronounced, loudly. 'No daughter of mine is going to show herself in such a rig out. It's bawdy,' he thundered. 'Bawdy!'

Amy had taken off her mask to smile at him. 'Why, Papa,' she said very sweetly, 'What's wrong with it? Look on the mantelpiece. She's been there all along, and you were never shocked before.'

'There's all the difference in the world,' said her father, 'all the difference, young lady, and you know it.' (185)

Amy, of course, in quite a different sense, is aware that there is "all the difference in the world" between herself and a lifeless figurine and thus struggles against their efforts to make her into a china doll. It is telling, too, that in these two rebellions Amy most beligerently defies

the two men who most attempt to control her: Gabriel and her father (DeMouy, "Face to Face" 132).

Nowhere is this more apparent than in her attempts to avoid marriage--what her family regards as a culmination but which she regards as an end. Eva correctly notes that the parties and balls were designed as markets for the girls of her day to present themselves to potential "buyers," but she incorrectly classifies Amy as just another "sex-ridden" female, competing for the marriage prize (216). Amy does, of course, participate in the lifestyle of a belle, but less for the purposes of obtaining a husband than for the pleasure it gives her personally. Eva acknowledges this subjectivity, but bitterly, referring to Amy as "'a spoiled darling, doing as she please[s] and letting other people suffer for it'" (211).

Happy with the means but not the end, Amy tries to not only extend the belle phase beyond its rigidly defined time frame, but to reconstruct it as well, marking it with her own subjectivity and refusing to exchange her goal (pleasure) for her family's. Ironically and tragically, Sophia Jane encourages Amy to embrace what her own experience has convinced her is a deficient and unfulfilling role, alternately presenting marriage as a "cure" for women's condition, as a romantic ideal, and even as an innate desire, commenting that "'young girls found a hundred ways to deny they wished to be married'" (182-83--emphasis

mine). Amy tellingly replies that she needs not a husband but a "'good dancing partner to guide [her] through life . . . that's the match I'm looking for'" (183), revealing her emphasis on her own pleasure and yet also forecasting her ultimate inability to live a life independent of masculine control.

Because she only revises rather than deconstructs the role of the belle, the structure itself remains intact. Perhaps Amy does not wholly reject the role because, like her mother before her, her identity needs the definition, order, and security that established social structures provide--the binding of the book. Thus, though she senses that marriage will be her "'funeral'" (182), the death of her subjectivity, autonomy, and--with Gabriel--her pleasure as well, Amy nevertheless chooses marriage.

Jane Krause DeMouy suggests that Amy's logic in her sudden and inexplicable decision to marry Gabriel is that if she is not psychologically committed to marriage--as she would not be with Gabriel--there would be no "real" loss of her virginity (Pomegranate 236), her only power (225). A more plausible explanation for her choice might be her discovery that she is pregnant with Raymond's child. If so, Amy's need for order, stability, and propriety--the preservation of a stable core of being--proves to be the most powerful element of her identity. Perhaps at first believing that her subjectivity can survive within marriage

(while on her honeymoon in New Orleans during Mardi Gras she determines not to "'watch the show from a balcony'" [192]) Amy soon convinces herself of the impossibility of their coexistence. Having signalled the end of her life as a belle--the only role through which she could even begin to write her own story--with the resounding ring of marriage, Amy now sees herself as a closed book. Her core identity now fragmented, unable to preserve a sense of herself as individual and real, Amy performs the ultimate subjective act and kills herself.

DeMouy comments that Amy's decision to kill herself is characteristic: in Amy's mind, if she cannot choose her mode of life, she will choose her mode of death. DeMouy also suggests that Amy may have been aware of the extended influence of her decision; knowing that her suicide would assure her place as a family legend, Amy chooses this as an appropriately tragic ending to her story ("Face to Face" 135).

Though in life, the world of "true but not real" poetry cannot contain Amy, in death it becomes capable of describing her condition. Ironically, it is Gabriel's "tombstone" poem written for Amy which admits to the suffering she endured during life and the escape afforded her through death:

'She lives again who suffered life,
Then suffered death, and now set free
A singing angel, she forgets
The griefs of old mortality.' (181)

Appropriately, these lines are inspired by a Poe poem, "For Annie," the same poem which Miranda quotes from earlier to describe Amy's "poetic" life (178).^{*} The first stanza of Poe's poem, as Thomas Walsh points out, more tellingly reflects Amy's attitude toward life:

Thank Heaven! the crisis--
The danger is past,
And the lingering illness
Is over at last--
And the fever called 'Living'
Is conquered at last. (60)

At the close of "Old Mortality," Miranda, now eighteen, tired of hearing multiple versions of the past, yearning to discover a core truth which lies beyond those fictions, makes a bold declaration of intent:

Her mind closed stubbornly against remembering, not the past but the legend of the past, other people's memory of the past, at which she had spent her life peering in wonder like a child at a magic-lantern show. . . . I can't live in their world any longer, she told herself, listening to the voices back of her. Let them tell their stories to each other. Let them go on explaining how things happened. I don't care. At least I can know the truth about what happens to me, she assured herself silently, making a promise to herself. . . . (221)

This intention is, of course, just as romantic in its idealism as the fictions she vows to reject, a truth which Miranda cannot yet realize but which the narrator, perhaps a wiser, more experienced version of Miranda, or perhaps Porter herself, can comment upon, adding that the promise is made to herself "in her hopefulness, her ignorance" (221). For, as the passive voice of Miranda's final assertion

implies--"At least I can know the truth about what happens to me"--Miranda cannot have absolute control over her circumstances and conditions. Furthermore, Miranda's identity is and will be irrevocably influenced by the past, and not just by the past but by "the legend of the past, other people's memory of the past" as well, if only in making this an issue to contend with. Yet the influence is not so negative as the jaded and confused Miranda of eighteen implies. If there had not been a discrepancy between romance and reality in her past, perhaps Miranda would never have questioned the definition of truth or sought it for herself. And, if she had lacked the influence of Sophia Jane, Nannie, and others, almost certainly she would not have possessed the core sense of self which enables her to order her existence. Miranda's entire childhood, from her earliest recorded experience in "The Circus" to the moment described here, is occupied with relating to this past, questioning its realities and legends, adopting and abandoning its conventions, integrating a core identity through interaction with it all.

The questions of identity which Miranda works through in "The Circus" are very basic, suggesting that these are initial formulations, that prior to this point she has had an unquestioning, childlike acceptance of her existence. As Judith Fetterley notes, the circus "represents an extension of her experience beyond the confines of her home and her

immediate family" (13). The circus therefore forces her to confront and re-think the easy definitions of human and inhuman, adult and child, even girl and woman, which she has been taught, definitions whose loss or slippage disorganize Miranda's identity.

This disorientation, or sense of being overwhelmed by the unfamiliar, is first apparent in Miranda's response to the band: Miranda panics because she cannot control the multiple sensations which affect her, cannot differentiate the components of the stimuli, and most importantly, cannot reconcile the oppositions which the music evokes.

An enormous brass band seemed to explode right at Miranda's ear. She jumped, quivered, thrilled blindly and almost forgot to breathe as sound and color and smell rushed together through her skin and hair and beat in her head and hands and feet and pit of her stomach. . . . The flaring lights burned through her lids, a roar of laughter like rage drowned out the steady raging of the drums and horns. (344)

The confusion and disorder this experience initiates in Miranda is evidently so entire that it causes her to question even the basis of human identity. Thus what is most frightening about the acrobat clown, the first sight Miranda sees after opening her eyes, is his possible inhumanity. She sees his grease paint as a mask of death, his acrobatics at first as supernatural, his form as "inhuman" (344). Ironically, Miranda fears the dwarf, whom she encounters while escaping from this "inhuman figure," because she recognizes him as horribly human: "It chilled

her with a new kind of fear: she had not believed he was really human" (345).

Underlying her fear of them both, however, is the disruption of her distinction between adult and child. Wanting to believe that adults are immeasurably more mature than children, more sensitive to others, more dignified, Miranda is horrified to see her family deriving pleasure from the pain of another, the flailings of the acrobatic clown whom she believes to be in danger: "The crowd roared with savage delight, shrieks of dreadful laughter like devils in delicious torment" (345).

Fetterley suggests that the enjoyment the adults receive from the clown's antics is based on their dissociation from him, their certainty that he is distinctly Other. Miranda, by contrast, cannot separate her sympathy from him and sees herself as the Other along with him (14). Certainly this could be an aspect of Miranda's terror, for it disrupts her integrated sense of self by separating her from her family group, by making her Other rather than Same. Jane Krause DeMouy suggests yet another explanation for Miranda's fear: the clown's stumbling efforts to keep from falling unconsciously awaken in Mirandaa sense of her own sexual vulnerability and possible destruction, since falling, to Freud, signified "'surrender to an erotic temptation'" (193).

Even as she escapes one terror, however, Miranda faces another more horrible; as Dicey leads her out of the tent, a dwarf forces her to re-evaluate her once-solid definitions. Because his child-like stature enables them to be eye-to-eye, Miranda at first identifies with him, hoping to see sympathy in his "kind, not-human golden eyes" (345). What she receives is indeed a mirroring of her own pain, but as mockery, not identification, which she immediately associates with adulthood and just as immediately recoils from: "[he] made a horrid grimace at her, imitating her own face. . . . Dicey drew her away quickly, but not before Miranda had seen in his face, suddenly, a look of haughty, remote displeasure, a true grown-up look. She knew it well" (345).

When the other children of the family return from the circus and Miranda recognizes that their eyes are also "malicious . . . watching [her] squirm" (346), Miranda's isolation is complete. Able to identify with neither adults nor children, Miranda is left in undefined chaos, stripped of her subjectivity and voice, objectified and "completely subjugated by her fears" (347). The very foundations of her existence quaked, it is not even a possibility to Miranda to survive alone, as an alien, effecting her own reintegration. No longer can she "answer back" to Dicey or live independent of adult response; now she is totally dependent upon

relation with them for an inward sense of order and confirmation of her identity.

Ordinarily she did not care how cross she made the harassed adults around her. Now if Dicey must be cross, she still did not really care, if only Dicey might not turn out the lights and leave her to the fathomless terrors of the darkness . . . she hugged Dicey with both arms, crying, 'Don't, don't leave me. Don't be so angry! I c-c-can't b-bear it!' (347-48)

Besides prompting Miranda to question her humanity and her role as a child as factors in shaping her identity, the circus initiates Miranda's growing awareness of her sexuality, especially its ability to entirely objectify her. Looking through the bleacher slats below her, Miranda notices "roughly dressed little boys peeping up from the dust below. They were squatted in little heaps, staring up quietly." Miranda does not understand their intent, but does recognize that their stares are without "any kind of friendliness." It is Dicey who makes Miranda vaguely aware that they have an interest in her body. "'You jus mind yo' own business and stop throwin' yo' legs around that way" (344).

It is no wonder, then, that the circus is so disturbing to Miranda: it convolutes her most basic definitions and disorders her childishly secure identity, her structured and predictable existence. For, even (or perhaps especially) at this early point in her development, order and integration, the preservation of a core sense of self, are vitally important to Miranda, as they have consistently been for her

grandmother. In fact, Miranda's own need for a centered identity seems to have been inherited from Sophia Jane, and certainly Sophia Jane has been a centering point for Miranda and for all the other family members. This truth is reinforced even in Sophia Jane's maiden name Rhea, which means "mother of the gods" (Teixeira 50), a definition which reflects the position of esteem and authority they grant her. Nowhere is her importance more apparent than in "The Source," which Porter had originally titled "The Grandmother" (Letters 118). As is true of most children, Miranda and the others alternately reject and return to, resent and rejoice in Sophia Jane's strength: "They loved their Grandmother; she was the only reality to them in a world that seemed otherwise without fixed authority or refuge[.] . . . Just the same they felt that Grandmother was tyrant, and they wished to be free of her" (324). Ultimately, however, she is their inescapable source, they the fruits planted by her hands, a fact represented in Sophia Jane's proud claim:

'I have planted five orchards in three States, and now I see only one tree in bloom.' She would stand quite still for a moment looking at the single tree, representing all her beloved trees still blooming, flourishing, and preparing to bring forth fruit in their separate places. (322)

Appropriately, the "single tree" upon which she gazes is a cling peach-tree, signifying her offspring's dependence upon her, yet at the same time there is the unmistakable indication that Sophia Jane's centering allows also a

healthy grounding and an independent growth; this truth is reiterated in her walks through the orchards, during which the children are "running before her and running back to her side," her skirt "sweeping a faint path behind her" (325--emphasis mine). Not surprisingly, then, it is Sophia Jane who recognizes that "'the fruits of their present are in a future . . . far off'" (347) while acknowledging the incalculable influence of their rooting in the past, where she is chief gardener.

Since Sophia Jane raises Miranda, it is therefore natural that Miranda would share her grandmother's need for an ordered identity. During Miranda's early childhood, this desire for order takes the form of a preoccupation with naming and definition, perhaps most obvious in "The Fig Tree." Wonderfully, this same story which in the beginning demonstrates Miranda's need for an integrated and unified identity, by the end hints at the multiplicity of identity which Miranda much later is able to possess but which is at this point only an intriguing possibility.

Predominant, however, is Miranda's insistence on immutable definitions which help maintain her core sense of self. As in "The Circus," when these solid, predictable definitions waver and threaten to collapse, Miranda's identity becomes fragmented and unstable. For example, Miranda is disturbed by the dual naming of the farm: her grandmother calls it Cedar Grove, her father names it

Halifax, the names, of course, reflecting their differing responses to the place. Vacillating between the two names/definitions, Miranda ultimately chooses with her grandmother: "Halifax wasn't the name of Grandmother's farm at all, it was Cedar Grove, but Father always called it Halifax" (353). Though she admits the veracity of her father's association of the farm with heat, it meets Miranda's identity needs more fully to emphasize the preservative, sheltering connotations of Cedar Grove: it is a "'right name'" (353).

Similarly, Miranda is troubled by the overlap in naming the women who are dearest to her, wanting the clarity and order of distinct and individual identities for each.

Another strange way her father had of talking was calling Grandmother 'Mammy.' Aunt Jane was Mammy. Sometimes he called Grandmother 'Mama,' but she wasn't Mama either, she was really Grandmother. Mama was dead. (354)

In "The Grave," which takes place at least a year or two later than "The Fig Tree," Miranda shows her continuing insistence upon solid definition and reveals more distinctly the need behind this urge: a need for ultimate truth, an unchanging reality which she can use to define herself. "Wastefulness was vulgar. It was also a sin. These were truths; she had heard them repeated many times and never once disputed" (365). This need dominates even comparatively trivial situations--thus, in "The Fig Tree" when her father threatens to leave for Cedar Grove without

her if she doesn't hurry, Miranda believes him and is resentful and confused when she discovers it is a "lie":

"'Stop getting so excited, Baby, you know we wouldn't leave you for anything.' Miranda wanted to talk back: 'Then why did you say so?'" (356) The same need compels Miranda to verify even the number of kittens that her father has expansively claimed to be at Cedar Grove (350).

Though these examples are minor, the story itself, of course, revolves around a definition far more essential--the definition of death. The incident with the baby chick which she believes to be dead and thus buries is horrifying to her largely because it forces her to question the fallibility of a definition she believed to be unquestionably accurate but which in fact is flawed. For example, Miranda seems to accept (though probably does not comprehend) the finality of death--"dead meant gone away forever"--but does not truly grasp its entire alteration, its absolute removal from life, as is shown through this description:

Lizards on rocks turned into shells, with no lizard inside at all. If caterpillars all curled up and furry didn't move when you poked them with a stick, that meant they were dead--it was a sure sign.

When Miranda found any creature that didn't move or make a noise, or looked somehow different from the live ones, she always buried it in a little grave with flowers on top and a smooth stone at the head. (354)

Miranda does not understand that a lizard shell can sometimes signify not death but renewal, a seasonal shedding of skin; that a curled, unmoving caterpillar can be only

exercising a defense mechanism against attack. Miranda understands death only as "somehow different," not as the opposite of life. Thus she can feel confident in burying the chick because it meets her simple criteria of being motionless, quiet, and "different." When, however, weeping rises from the grave, Miranda's interior sense of order is severely disrupted: only the prospect of new life in the form of kittens at the farm and the suddenly-acquired desire to mother her doll can restore some inward order to Miranda (358).

Balance is not wholly achieved, however, until Miranda's encounter with Great-Aunt Eliza, who is herself a living example of the possibilities she presents to Miranda. Sophia Jane's sister, but a woman who lives entirely by self-definition, unrestricted by convention and "acceptable" roles for women, Eliza introduces Miranda to multiple ways of being and seeing. Eliza, described as "loom[ing] like a mountain with her grizzled iron-colored hair" (359--emphasis mine) and elsewhere as "one solid pyramidal monument from floor to neck" (174)--the most stable of geometric figures--demonstrates the strength and stability possible for a woman even if (or perhaps, when) she rejects formulaic definitions of female beauty and conventional expectations for women. Eliza dips snuff and climbs ladders, "'[in]appropriate behavior at [her] time of [life]'" (358), exchanging them for a solid, self-assured identity, as this quotation

illustrates: "When she sat down the chair disappeared under her, and she seemed to be sitting solidly on herself from her waistband to the floor" (359--emphasis mine).

Great-Aunt Eliza is constantly occupied in examining ordinary things from new and varied perspectives, scrutinizing leaves, bark, even potato peelings and raisins under a magnifying glass or a microscope, gazing at stars through a telescope erected on the hen house. Eliza's association with these instruments, as Judith Fetterley points out, identifies her as one who wants "to discover more completely and clearly what is real" (16). Eliza's habit of examining rather than simply seeing intrigues Miranda, whose name--"one who looks"--establishes a connection between her and her great-aunt. The crucial moment for Miranda occurs when she looks through Eliza's telescope and recognizes the possibility of multiple worlds, perspectives, definitions, and even identities. The experience introduces Miranda to a wider range of conception, where ordinary voice and response are inadequate.

They were so awed they looked at each other like strangers, and did not exchange a word. Miranda saw only a great pale flaring disk of cold light, but she knew it was the moon and called out in pure rapture, 'Oh, it's like another world!'

'Why, of course, child,' said Great-Aunt Eliza, in her growling voice, but kindly, 'other worlds, a million other worlds.' (361)

Miranda's need for the stability of the known causes her timidly to ask "'Like this one?'" yet Eliza's "negative

capability" reply--"'Nobody knows, child'"--allows Miranda's troubled questioning to be transformed into a song, her childlike timidity to be exchanged for self-assurance.

"'Nobody knows, nobody knows,' Miranda sang to a tune in her head, and when the others walked on, she was so dazzled with joy she fell back by herself, walking a little distance behind Great-Aunt Eliza" (361).

Of more immediate consequence, the experience enables Miranda to resolve her horror at possibly having buried a live chick by giving her an alternate interpretation of the "weep weep" sound she heard from the grave. The weeping may now be a tree frog's song rather than a buried chick's cry. Perhaps Miranda's vision through the telescope allows Miranda to accept the unknowability, the "difference" of death, to define it plurally, as do some adults, as a peaceful nothingness, a glorious second life, an escape from the limitations of life, and so on. Certainly it fosters a new connection between Miranda and Great-Aunt Eliza. Miranda now "seize[s] the warm snuffy hand held out to her and [hangs] on hard" (361), whereas before this scene, Miranda literally washed her hands to rid herself of the "snuffy smell" (360).

Margaret Bolsterli does not admit this connection, arguing that Miranda rejects Eliza "absolutely," so "ugly and repulsive" does she seem to Miranda ("'Bound' Characters" 98). Bolsterli extends the same argument to

Miranda's relationship with Eva, and concludes that Miranda therefore removes herself from all examples of female independence. Though Miranda's earlier hand washing confirms Bolsterli's opinion, clearly Miranda's attitude changes here, a transition Bolsterli does not acknowledge.

Eliza's explanation of the tree frogs' seasonal shedding of skin augments Miranda's introduction to multiplicity: as the frogs can "'pull [their skins] off over their heads like little shirts and . . . eat them'" (361), unrestricted by their bodies but instead nourished by them, so Miranda can consider that as a woman she too can escape definition through her female body, that her identity can take on multiple "'prett[y] little shapes'" (362). The image of confinement, of being buried alive--which Judith Fetterley connects with woman's condition (16)--is therefore replaced by this much more affirmative image, which also shows her that definitions can shift and transform without damage to her sense of order: death may become life, life may actually be death; sorrow can be transformed to "bliss" (362); weeping may become a song.

As real as this vision of multiplicity is to Miranda, she seemingly does not internalize it or fully grasp its implications until years later, when in "Holiday" another death causes her once again to question her conception of identity. For it is Sophia Jane, not Eliza, who is Miranda's constant influence, and Sophia Jane, as has

already been shown, is guided by a core sense of identity and a drive toward integration which is foreign to Eliza. Though Eliza is solid in her strength, strength can, of course, be multiple; if she "sit[s] solidly on herself," her position unquestionably shifts--moving up and down ladders of possibilities. As Eliza accurately notes, Sophia Jane could never fully comprehend Eliza's own plural perspective (360).

Given Miranda's conception of identity as integrated and constant, it is clear why Miranda has difficulty accepting her family's romantic mythology, which often conflicts with reality. This acceptance is particularly problematic for Miranda, since most of the romanticism establishes idealistic standards for women to which she, as female, is expected to conform. Amy, of course, is the model of these standards to the family, and the older generation especially--including Sophia Jane--sees no dichotomy between their image of her and her reality. They have been able to reconcile discrepancies by emphasizing feeling over fact, a capability Miranda neither has nor understands:

This loyalty of their father's in the face of evidence contrary to his ideal had its springs in family feeling and a love of legend that he shared with the others. They loved to tell stories, romantic and poetic, or comic with a romantic humor; they did not gild the outward circumstances, it was the feeling that mattered. (175)

Thus their fictions are facts in their minds, and they believe in all earnest that Amy is an "angel" (176) because they proclaim her to be; Eva, using the same method but with radically different intent, is equally convinced that Amy was a "'devil'" (211); Sophia Jane probably comes closer to truth than either of these, recognizing that Amy is (only) "'angelic in sleep'" (188).

Miranda, however, sees contradiction in what to her family is confirmation; to her, "none of [the illustrations of angels] resembled Aunt Amy in the least, nor the kind of beauty they had been brought up to admire" (176). Even at age eight, Miranda is perceptive enough to look beyond the mere surface of things and rebellious enough to question what is presented to her as fact. Eventually, Miranda does, with the rest of her family, embrace a preference for the romantic, yet with important qualifications. First, Miranda accepts romance as romance, not as reality, and values not the people of the past or the mementoes which are tangible traces of them--these are "nothing; they were dust, perishable as the flesh" (176)--but rather is "drawn and held by the mysterious love of the living . . . their living memory" (176). That is, Miranda cherishes the reality of love and memory, the responses of the living.

Secondly, as the previous point makes clear, Miranda prefers present romanticism over past because of its vitality, its ability to be experienced. Thus, Miranda,

with the others of her generation, scorns remembrance of Rubinstein for the "real" romance of Paderewski. "They had never heard Rubinstein; they had, one hour since, heard Paderewski, and why should anyone need to recall the past?" (179) Perhaps most importantly, Miranda's romanticism is not communal, but individual, distinctly hers. Not coincidentally, the language used to describe Miranda's own romantic creation expands on the patchwork metaphor used earlier to describe Sophia Jane and Nannie's distinctive rearrangement of their history. Miranda's "quilt" is, of course, quite different from theirs. The language also integrates the literature metaphor used to describe the family's construction of Amy as myth. The metaphors are used consciously, stressing the act of self-creation and the involvement of individual identity in that creation:

They listened, all ears and eager minds, picking here and there among the floating ends of narrative, patching together as well as they could fragments of tales that were like bits of poetry or music, indeed were associated with the poetry they had heard or read, with music, with the theater. (176)

What Miranda is too young/naive to realize is that romanticism is not always innocuous, that there are consequences of choosing to believe romantic myths and even more important consequences of being the object created by that mythology. Not for long can Miranda sustain her attempt to reconcile the romantic and the real by emphasizing present over past, living memory over dead

actualities. In fact, her "real romanticism" developed in "Old Mortality" at age eight is seriously questioned in "The Grave" when Miranda is nine and further crumbled in Part II of "Old Mortality" when Miranda is ten.

"The Grave" involves both Miranda and her twelve-year-old brother Paul, which helps develop the epiphany of gender which she receives. DeMouy points out that this is the only time Miranda is seen without Maria, which further forecasts the gender realizations Miranda will come to (Pomegranate 211). Miranda's realization begins with her and Paul's simultaneous discovery of "treasure" in the emptied grave trenches they are exploring. In her grandfather's grave, Miranda finds a silver coffin screw-head in the shape of a dove; in another grave, Paul finds a gold wedding band. Significantly, Miranda much prefers the ring and Paul the dove, so an exchange is made. Clearly, Miranda associates the ring with a distinctly feminine and highly romanticized version of female possibility, shown through the fantasy prompted by the wearing of the ring.

Now the ring, shining with the serene purity of fine gold on her rather grubby thumb, turned her feelings against her overalls and sockless feet, toes sticking through the thick brown leather straps. She wanted to go back to the farmhouse, take a good cold bath, dust herself with plenty of Maria's violet talcum powder . . . put on the thinnest, most becoming dress she owned, with a big sash, and sit in a wicker chair under the trees . . . (365)

Only later, after the incident with the rabbits, does Miranda reconsider this vision as a superficial conception

of womanhood which denies the objectification of such a position and the biological entrapment which is so disturbing to her when she recognizes it in the female rabbit. At this later point, the exchange of dove for ring takes on additional significance. No longer a casual childhood swap, it becomes a symbolic forfeiture of the spirit, freedom, and limitless and expanding potential suggested by the dove, its spread wings, and the spiraled whorls in its breast, for an appropriation of the roles, their enclosure, and possibly a constraining fecundity represented in the circular band engraved with "intricate" and entwining flowers and leaves (363) handed to her by a male.

Porter carefully sets up the rabbit episode to allow no other explanation for its disturbing effect than that it initiates Miranda into a clearer comprehension of her femaleness. The incident is not unsettling because she witnesses an animal's death, "for she was accustomed to the sight of animals killed in hunting" (366), nor because she grieves for the death of the innocent unborn--she feels "shocked delight" in their appearance (366). Rather, it is the sight of the blood trickling over them which makes her "tremble" and associate their condition with her own. "She understood a little of the secret formless intuitions in her own mind and body, which had been clearing up, taking form, so gradually and so steadily she had not realized that she

was learning what she had to know" (366-67--emphases mine). The emphasized words point out the inevitability and inescapability of the knowledge Miranda gains, a knowledge which the older Paul already possesses and which even in her is not new, but only newly discovered: "Having seen, she felt at once as if she had known all along" (366).

Her discovery, which "quietly and terribly agitate[s]" Miranda and which to Paul is "something forbidden" (367) is that as a female she may share the rabbit's maternal destiny, perhaps with the same proclivity associated with rabbits and which her grandmother's "grim and terrible race of procreation" mirrored. The blood evokes the pain of childbirth, the endless cycles of menstruation, the male invasion of the body which await her. All three are grotesquely played out in this hunting scene: the female rabbit's body is penetrated by a bullet from a phallic gun, wielded by a man; the process of menstruation is inverted by the act, with dying babies being the "waste" sloughed off; the birth is a second death: "Paul buried the young rabbits again in their mother's body" (367--emphasis mine).

Judith Fetterley regards this scene as a literalizing of Miranda's earlier fears in "The Fig Tree"--the baby rabbits are buried alive (17). According to Fetterley, Miranda recognizes that if she allows herself to conform to southern convention or romantic ideals, she will meet a

similar fate--and die "without giving birth to herself" (18).

Jane Flanders also sees in this scene Miranda's horrified recognition of the negative possibilities associated with her femaleness. "At last grasping the secret of her own sexuality, and the taboo accompanying this knowledge, Miranda senses a mysterious threat to her femaleness which will bind her still more closely to the rules of feminine decorum" (56).

The horror of this vision, however, goes beyond Miranda's recognition of her female destiny, forcing her to confront her most basic conception of identity. The layers which Paul must strip away to reveal the baby rabbits--mother's skin, flesh, womb, placentas--confirm Porter's (and through her, Miranda's) belief in a core identity which exists beyond surfaces or temporal changes and circumstances. Yet what Miranda sees at core here is unsettling: the babies are deaf, their "ears folded close," "blind," and "almost featureless" (366), presenting the possibility to Miranda that a core self can be identity-less, nonexistent even, or at least somehow intangible, unknowable. Perhaps it is the fear of this possibility which prompts Miranda to affirm her own identity/name by saying "'Oh, I want to see [mirar/Miranda]," contrasting her own power of vision with the "veil[ed]," "blind" faces she sees here.

That she is not entirely able to accomplish this self-affirmation or deal with the implications of her identity as female is perhaps suggested by her psychological "burial" of this incident. Twenty years later, the vision which in her childhood was veiled and obscure is now "plain and clear in its true colors," and is consequently even more horrifying to her. Rather than to confront it face to face, Miranda prefers to continue to see through a glass darkly, recovering the troubling memory with a "blazing" vision of her brother, "a pleased sober smile in his eyes, turning the silver dove over and over in his hands" (368).

Not surprisingly, Miranda's suppression is an extension of Porter's own. The story of "The Grave" was based on an actual hunting experience Porter had with her brother Paul. Porter claimed that she, like Miranda, had never told anyone of the events of that day. Her brother Paul, however, told another story, revealing that Porter had immediately told her father of the incident, for which Paul received a beating (Givner, Life 71).

Perhaps it is not necessary or even accurate to read this final scene as merely or simply an act of denial or suppression, however. The fact that the ring is not mentioned and the dove is centralized may suggest that Miranda has rejected female convention and imposed female identity in favor of the creative power, expansiveness, and freedom suggested by the dove, a symbol of divine Spirit.

Certainly Miranda re-creates her memory here, stripping it of its negative possibility and vivifying its positive aspects of relationality and power. Thus, rather than a denial, this closing scene may reveal Miranda's bold choice to adopt for herself a power traditionally reserved only for men.

Fetterley also reads this scene as an affirmation. "The struggle for authenticity is over; Miranda is in possession of her vision and able to tell it straight" (18). Similarly, Constance Rooke and Bruce Wallis comment that the scene reveals not a "repression of the experience with the rabbits . . . but an awakening to further knowledge" signified by the blazing sun and by the emphasis on the dove (as a symbol of the Holy Spirit) which makes redemption possible (67-68).

Yet even if Miranda does achieve this measure of self-creation and definition, it is, at the time of "The Grave," twenty years into the future. For now, there is continued growth, further questioning of the family's romantic mythology, and additional development of her female identity. This continuing process is seen in the second section of "Old Mortality," which occurs one year after the events of "The Grave." In this section, Miranda has an experience which confirms her prior troubled recognition of the reality of female existence. The horse race introduces

her to the cost to women of romanticism, initiating her rejection of the family's mythology.

That Miranda at the opening of the second section invests heavily in the pattern of romanticism established by her family is clear through her use of the word immured to describe her life at the convent school. Taken from the pulp novels which "gothicize" the Catholic experience, the word reveals Miranda's preference to consider herself trapped rather than bored. Miranda's, is a "beautiful confinement" and of her own creation, easily abandoned for Saturdays at the races. "It was true the little girls were hedged and confined, but in a large garden with trees and a grotto; they were locked at night into a cold dormitory, with all the windows open . . ." (194).

The romantic haze of the races, however, is replaced by a disturbing clarity when Miranda witnesses her uncle's horse's defeat in victory. Interestingly, so romanticized is Miranda's view of the races that she does not recognize its parallels with the circus that so disturbed her years earlier. The "beautiful, incredibly dressed ladies, all plumes and flowers and paint," the band with its "thundering drums and brasses," the horses with "tiny, monkey-shaped boy[s] on [their] back[s]" (196) serve as foreshadowings only to the reader of the anguish Miranda will soon face. To her the stands are indeed grand, the atmosphere elegant

and exciting, and not until she meets Uncle Gabriel does the vision begin to dissolve.

No longer Amy's dashing young suitor, Uncle Gabriel is now a fat, coarse man who manipulates horses for his own pleasure and gain; not coincidentally, both of the women connected with Uncle Gabriel--Aunt Amy and Miss Honey--are also associated with horses. In fact, a vague insight into this connection may be what most troubles Miranda about Miss Lucy's win. During the race, Miranda regards Miss Lucy--a descendant of Amy's own favorite horse--in the same way the family has always regarded Amy, as "their darling, their lovely" (198), but when Miranda sees the cost of that regard, her attitude shifts. The knowledge initiated in "The Grave" is augmented here as Miranda begins to comprehend the real, not the romantic, effects of women's objectification. Like Amy, Miss Lucy is pressured beyond her ability or desire to become an ideal; Miss Lucy attains winning stature, Amy becomes a winning statue, a southern lady. The price they pay is identical and profound: both are exhausted by demands, and Miss Lucy returns bleeding, "two thick red rivulets . . . stiffening her tender mouth and chin" (199), mirroring Amy's own hemorrhaging. As Aunt Eva notes in Part III, even this draining of Amy's life blood is romanticized and valorized by the family, its depleting effects on Amy unconsidered: "'And her illness wasn't romantic either . . . though to hear them tell it she

faded like a lily. Well, she coughed blood, if that's romantic'' (215).

The world of poetry which the family (and Miranda, until this moment) believed that Amy personified is exchanged for the harsh brassy tune of the racetrack band ("Whoa, you heifer, squalled the band with snorting brasses" [198]) and Miranda unequivocally rejects both Miss Lucy's and Amy's "successes."

Her heart clenched tight; that was winning, for Miss Lucy. So instantly and completely did her heart reject that victory, she did not know when it happened, but she hated it, and was ashamed that she had screamed and shed tears for joy when Miss Lucy, with her bloodied nose and bursting heart had gone past the judges' stand a neck ahead. (199)

Miranda's response--"she felt empty and sick"--echoes Amy's own weary antipathy for her condition: "'I'm sick of this world. I don't like anything in it'" (188).

The use of horses to illustrate female objectification is continued with Miss Honey. Significantly--and more accurately than either Maria or Miranda realize--Miranda at first thinks they are to see another race horse when Gabriel invites them to meet Miss Honey (200). There is even some similarity in description: in both cases, their appearances are the results of exertion, the terrible strain to meet expectations--Miss Lucy on the race track, Miss Honey as a southern woman, a dutiful wife. Miss Lucy's nostrils are "flaring and closing," the blood from her nose "stiffening her tender mouth and chin. . . . Her eyes were wild and her

knees were trembling, and she snored when she drew her breath" (199). Miss Honey, Uncle Gabriel's "'old girl,'" mirrors this pain. Her nostrils are "pinched together . . . her pale eyes kindling with blue fire, a stiff white line around her mouth" (202). Significantly, however, Miss Honey's appearance is the result of suppressed, not released, energy and power--more befitting a proper lady--though it is obvious that she too would like to "spring from the gate," though not, like Miss Lucy, to perform for men's gain. "All that she knew gleamed forth in a pallid, unquenchable hatred and bitterness that seemed enough to bring her long body straight up out of the chair in a fury" (203). Yet both she and Miss Lucy are ridden from race track to race track, re-strained by men, put through their paces and ultimately broken. Miss Lucy at least "wins" once.

Naturally these encounters have uncalculable effect upon Miranda's conception of romanticism and women's role within that structure, particularly since up to this point it is her ambition to be a jockey. Itself a romantic aspiration, Miranda's dream nevertheless reveals an imaginative subjectivity, an ability to convert her "defects" into strengths and to retain for herself a creative--and nonconventional--power: her plan is concomitant with her recognition that she will never be tall, graceful, beautiful, or an expert Spanish rider,

traits which comprise the formula for female excellence (176). Her shortness and springy energy, however, are assets for a jockey, and Miranda thus models herself after Todd Sloan (196). When Miranda recognizes the jockey's contribution to Miss Lucy's pain, however, she rejects her identification with a male role, choosing instead a compatriotism with the female horse.

This identification perhaps explains her miserable discomfort in meeting Miss Honey and her dismay in meeting Uncle Gabriel. The latter encounter forces her to seriously question the veracity of the entire family mythology, and in particular its version of romantic courtship: the race raises the possibility that courtship is not a perfect syncopation of man and woman but a relentless driv(ing) which results in female pain and loss, as it did with Amy. Her meeting Miss Honey puts her face to face with what might well be a more realistic (and common) condition of women, a condition that Amy died to avoid; Miss Honey, however, is tied to a void--a vacuous, unfulfilling marriage.

These are problematic and, again, not fully defined realizations which Miranda faces, yet they are essential influences upon her developing conception of female identity. Despite her growing awareness of female identity, still Miranda now--and for a long time to come--seems convinced there must be a core female identity, an essentially constant self which provides integration and

order. This belief is not explicitly articulated until Part III of "Old Mortality," when Miranda is eighteen, though it is implied earlier in Miranda's ongoing acceptance of the family's conception of "their" women in the face of contradictory evidence and in the creation, while at the convent, of an equally romantic mythology to define herself as a pitiable girl, immured. By age eighteen, however, Miranda has experienced the reality of courtship, marriage, and a life apart from her family, and her romantic illusions are filtered through this experience, though they are so deeply engrained that Miranda cannot wholly reject them. It is, in fact, a sign of her continued romanticism that she believes she can. As Kaye Gibbons explains, Miranda in this final section of "Old Mortality" "presses her intellect to assign truths, meanings, to memories recounted to her and to a past she has seen relived scene by scene" (75).

Appropriately, Miranda works through her adult conception of female identity on her way to the funeral of Gabriel, whose death of alcoholism represents the denouement of the romantic myth which defined Amy's identity. The myth is further erased--or at least made palimpsestic--through Miranda's conversation with Cousin Eva, who neither fit the description nor accepted the conventions of the southern belle. "Cursed" with chinlessness, Eva developed intellect and autonomy rather than feminine wiles. Possessing a "brisk, rustling energy" (206) and a "sharp clear orator's

voice" (217), Eva has dedicated her life to women's rights--voting, education, and financial independence--a forwardness intended to counteract the South's backwardness: "'In our part of the country, in my time, we were so provincial--a woman didn't dare to think or act for herself. The whole world was a little that way . . . but we were the worst, I believe'" (210).

Jane Flanders considers Eva as attaining independence through default rather than through her own subjectivity and strength: "independence was thrust upon her," Flanders writes, "because she did not succeed in fulfilling the expected feminine role" (51). Miranda, however, despite Margaret Bolsterli's claims to the contrary ("'Bound' Characters" 98), does recognize Eva's gains as resulting from her personal strength and admires her principles and independence. Yet at the same time, she nevertheless recognizes that bitterness motivates Eva and is thus hesitant to exchange the romantic southern values by which she was raised for Eva's emancipated lifestyle. Her reticence proves that her investment in conventional southern womanhood is deeper than even she is able to admit.

'Beauty goes, character stays,' said the small voice of axiomatic morality in Miranda's ear. It was a dreary prospect; why was a strong character so deforming? Miranda felt she truly wanted to be strong, but how could she face it, seeing what it did to one? (215)

One part of Miranda yearns for the simplicity of romanticizing, its ability to uncomplicate the complex by

ignoring what does not fit its ideal conception. Miranda succumbs to this tendency when she sums up Amy's identity by connecting it with her beauty, "as if this explained everything" (214). Yet another part of her rejects such simplistic definition, as is illustrated by her angry denial of Eva's characterization of Miranda's mother as a saint (217).

Further, Miranda's disillusioning experience with marriage makes her unable to look at life and at the past with wholly the same perspective she once had. Specifically, instead of accepting the family's idealistic, poetic version of Amy (or Eva's scandalous and bitter version which Miranda realizes is "'every bit as romantic'" [216]), Miranda now recognizes that Amy's life was fictionalized, her identity not allowed free expression. "What was the end of this story?" Miranda asks (214), and sympathizes with Amy's restriction rather than contributes to it. Miranda's attitude toward her marriage, for example, closely parallels Amy's.

It [the fact of the marriage] seemed very unreal even as she said it, and seemed to have nothing at all to do with the future. . . . the only feeling she could rouse in herself about it was an immense weariness as if it were an illness that she might one day hope to recover from. (212-13)

This opinion of marriage stands in ironic contrast to Sophia Jane's insistence on marriage as a cure for illness ("'Marriage and children would cure [Amy] of everything. . . It was called green-sickness, and everybody knew there was

only one cure'" [182]) but echoes Amy's association of it (and Gabriel) with dullness and sickness: "'I'm sick of this world. I don't like anything in it. It's so dull'" (188). Amy's nurse, in her evaluation of Amy's married life, reiterated these connections. "'She suffered a great deal--now she is at rest. She could not get well but she might have lived longer'" (193). Both Miranda and Amy also regard marriage as disconnected from the future: Amy states, "'If I live for a hundred years and turn green as grass . . . I still shan't want to marry Gabriel'" (182).

Because Miranda's experiences as a woman approximate Amy's, creating an identification with her, quite understandably Miranda's almost automatic impulse is to reject what she considers to be the source of their restriction: the family. Even this choice, however, is fraught with conflict, since family relationality is a large determinant of Miranda's identity, though she refuses to or cannot acknowledge her debt. Thus she grieves her "homelessness," her inability to know her "'own people and [her] own time'" (219). She yearns for the sanctuary and familiarity of her old room, if only to say goodbye to it (220), and for the solid, concrete reality of her father and her sister in a world of abstractions, untruths, and change (217).

This unacknowledged need for relation problematizes (and necessitates) her determined and even aggressive denial

of family connection. It first appears that Miranda rejects family relationality in response to having been rejected. Miranda's father's hands brace rather than embrace (218), and neither her father nor Cousin Eva respond to the symbolic distancing of Miranda's sitting with the black servant on their ride home (219). Miranda's response--"I cannot depend upon you beyond a certain point, why depend at all?" (219)--reveals her retaliatory stance.

A more important motive for her rejection, however, is Miranda's determination to break from everything which restricts her subjectivity, threatens to objectify her, or falsely defines her identity.

She did not want any more ties with this house, she was going to leave it, and she was not going back to her husband's family, either. She would have no more bonds that smothered her in love and hatred. She knew now why she had run away to marriage, and she knew that she was going to run away from marriage, and she was not going to stay in any place, with anyone, that threatened to forbid her making her own discoveries, that said 'No' to her. (220)

Clearly Miranda considers most restrictive the family's false representation of life, including their inaccurate assessment of her own identity. They have

. . . denied her the right to look at the world with her own eyes . . . demanded that she accept their version of life and yet could not tell her the truth, not in the smallest thing. . . . I won't be romantic about myself . . . Let them tell their stories to each other. . . . At least I can know the truth about what happens to me. . . . (219, 221)

Another advantage Miranda expects to gain from her estrangement from family is a distinct and independent voice, given expression through her own subjectivity, not through her family's established mythology. Miranda recognizes that her father's and Cousin Eva's language, though founded in precisely this mythology, can nevertheless for them be surprisingly vibrant, complementary, and interchangeable:

They sat back and went on talking steadily in their friendly family voices . . . interrupting each other, catching each other up on small points of dispute, with a gaiety and freshness which Miranda had not known they were capable of, going over old memories and finding new points of interest in them. (220)

Yet, for her, their language will not do. Because it is not a reflection of her own experience, because it cannot express the separateness of her identity or the reality of her subjectivity, Miranda rejects their words, their stories.

Miranda could not hear the stories above the noisy motor, but she felt she knew them well, or stories like them. She knew too many stories like them, she wanted something new of her own. The language was familiar to them, but not to her, not any more. (220)

But by far the most interesting--and for my purposes here, most significant--motive Miranda has for extricating herself from family relationality is her conviction that by shedding roles and relationships she can uncover a sort of essential self, an approximation of the "pure identities" she encounters in her dream in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider"

(311). Miranda sees her father and Cousin Eva as possessing and exhibiting such core identities, the product of a dissolution of roles, of a self-assurance, and (ironically, given Miranda's view of relation) of a relaxed and equal companionship between the two.

[They] were no longer Cousin Eva and Father, since they had forgotten her presence, but had become Eva and Harry, who knew each other well, who were comfortable with each other, being contemporaries on equal terms, who occupied by right their place in this world, at the time of life to which they had arrived by paths familiar to them both. They need not play their roles of daughter, of son, to aged persons who did not understand them; nor of father and elderly female cousin to young persons whom they did not understand. They were precisely themselves; their eyes cleared, their voices relaxed into perfect naturalness, they need not weigh their words or calculate the effect of their manner. (219)

This releasing of roles, this refusal of restrictive relationships, Miranda believes, will clear the way for the discovery and nurturance of her core identity. In fact, she regards all of life as directed towards this "end:" "Life was a substance, a material to be used, it took shape and direction and meaning only as the possessor guided and worked it; living was a progress of continuous and varied acts of the will directed towards a definite end" (220). All experience, to Miranda, must therefore be "shape[d]," "guided," and "directed" to form an integrated, defineable, and singular self--a self which because it is a "definite end" is immutable and constant.

What Miranda cannot or will not acknowledge, however, is that her past and her relationships within that past have and will continue to be the principal determiners of her core self. In fact, even her belief that life must be directed towards a "definite end" is a result of "all her earliest training." Therefore, an understanding and acceptance of her past and those in it rather than an escape from them, will more fully reveal her essential self to her.

Though Miranda cannot, then, the narrator and we as the readers can see the irony, naivete, and romanticism in Miranda's vows not to be romantic about herself, to know the truth about herself, or to live outside of her family's influence. She must "listen to the voices back of her" (221), not only for the duration of the car ride home, but for the rest of her life.

Though six years pass between the end of "Old Mortality" and the beginning of "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," the opening page of the latter could easily describe Miranda's sentiments upon waking in her old room the day of Gabriel's funeral. Her circumstances have radically changed--she is divorced, living in Denver, far from her Texas home, working at a job which enables her to support herself, living through a war--yet her feelings are nearly identical to those she had at the brink of adulthood. She wakes to a place "not hers" (269), an echo of Miranda's insistence in "Old Mortality" that it is she "'who [has] no

place'" (219). Miranda is still driven by a desire to escape family influences, to avoid their stories ("what accumulation of storied dust never allowed to settle in peace" [269]), the relational entanglements ("How I have loved this house in the morning before we are all awake and tangled together like badly cast fishing lines" [269]), and perhaps most of all, their restrictions upon her independent identity. We find in this story, for example, that it is Miranda's family who ask the questions which interrogate her mind as well as her actions: "Where are you going, What are you doing, What are you thinking, How do you feel, Why do you say such things, What do you mean?" (269) These are the "questions to be asked first" that demand her answers, "too many . . . [and] none of them right" (221), of age eighteen. "'I will now do this, I will be that, I will go yonder, I will take a certain road to a certain end'" (221).

Thomas Walsh is thus correct when he notes that Miranda's insecurity and fear at the opening of the story are caused by her unsettled relationship to her family rather than by the war ("Dream Self" 82). As it has always been, Miranda's relationship to her family strongly influences her sense of self. Miranda escapes from her family's questions because she is frightened by the possibility of being understood and wants to maintain her autonomy and individual identity, both of which she regards as threatened by relationship (83). Walsh astutely points

out that Miranda's fear of relationship--including but not limited to her family--reveals also a fear of relation with her self (84).

Naturally, then, her response to family is not without ambivalence. On the one hand, she can ask herself "What else besides them did I have in the world?" and answer "Nothing," revealing the extent to which her identity is shaped by connection with them, and on the other hand defiantly lay claim to the "nothing" which is hers: "Nothing is mine, I have only nothing but it is enough" (270). Perhaps the extent of her ambivalence is best illustrated through her choice of which horse to ride in her race with the "stranger" of her dream. All three horses have been owned by her family, and her choice being limited to these suggests the inevitability of her being dependent upon her past; however, her rejection of Miss Lucy and Fiddler, two horses which have been explicitly associated with Aunt Amy and Sophia Jane, respectively, the two women most influential in shaping Miranda's conception of female identity, and her choice of Graylie "because he is not afraid of bridges" (270) makes clear that Miranda is planning for transition. Even Graylie's name suggests an ambivalence: her choice can be neither black nor white, for or against, but a region between.

Nevertheless, Miranda brings this continuum of feeling to new circumstances which have the potential to radically

revise her thought. In "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," war is a cataclysmic reality which convolutes Miranda's sense of identity: it disintegrates her order, calls long-held values into question, isolates her, deteriorates her voice, and forces her into roles incompatible with her sense of self. Intensifying her feelings of disorder is the influenza, brought by the war, to which Miranda falls victim. An influence, however, which counteracts this disruption and restores order to her identity is Miranda's relationship with Adam, her "first man" who is simultaneously forbidden fruit and "a fine healthy apple" (280) for Miranda. Aided by Adam, Miranda is able to survive the war's deleterious influence and emerge with a heightened subjectivity and a more truthful awareness of her need for relationality. Somewhat surprisingly, however, war's experiences do not revolutionize Miranda's way of formulating identity but in fact solidify her lifelong insistence upon a core identity for herself.

The struggle which preoccupied Miranda in earlier texts, her vacillation between accepting familial connection in order to meet her relational needs and rejecting such relation in order to forge an independent identity and discover "the truth about what happens to [her]" (221) is still present in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" but in far more subtle form. In fact, her family in this text may be more conspicuous by its absence than by its presence. At only

three points is her family mentioned: the first two reflect her continued ambivalence and deliberate effort to shelve her memories of family and its influence, while the third seems to suggest that Miranda finally acknowledges her family as a secure and vital source of her identity.

The first mention occurs at an early stage of her illness, when her first thought is to return to her family, a possibility which she immediately rejects, jealously claiming even sickness as her own. "I suppose I should ask to be sent home, she thought, it's a respectable old custom to inflict your death on the family if you can manage it. No, I'll stay here, this is my business" (298). Yet ambivalence remains, as is shown in her imaginative replacement of the snow-covered Rockies--her location now--for the "warmth" of a positively-remembered Texas as the best place to spend her confinement (298). Just as easily, however, the "drifting fragments of palm and cedar . . . a sky that warmed without dazzling" that she associates with her Texas home is transformed into a "writhing terribly alive and secret place of death" (299), the jungle of her dream.

Miranda's second mention of family is to Adam. Her reticence and evasiveness in speaking of her past suggest her efforts to suppress it, but her comments reveal a more uncertain attitude.

You'd get the notion I had a very sad life . . . and perhaps it was, but I'd be glad enough to have it now. If I could have it back, it would be easy

to be happy about almost anything at all. That's not true, but that's the way I feel now. (302)

Miranda's final reflection on her family and her past within that family is more oblique and certainly more complex than her previous two. Central to her fourth dream, Miranda's past now emerges as a positive source of her identity, struggling against the tainting effects of war. Her past is represented in her dream as a well which reaches to a buried and distant source. Located on her father's farm, this well was "once dry but [is] now bubbling with living water" (309), suggesting that the past, which she has so long regarded as depleted and depleting, has resurfaced, showing itself to be a vital and valuable element of her sense of self. The disorder and isolation that war brings, however, is so pervasive that it contaminates even the origins of Miranda's identity. She cannot retrieve an uncomplicated, ordered sense of self, a pure essence signified in her dream through the baby or its baptism in a font of "living water." Instead, she is a "naked infant writhing on the point of [Dr. Hildesheim's] bayonet," tossed into the poisoned and suddenly "soundless" waters (309). Clearly the very sources of Miranda's identity and, even more troubling, Miranda's sense of her identity as a core, grounded solidly and uncompromised by outside influences, are being corrupted by war, and Miranda fights against their deterioration, needing desperately an organized and whole center. Thus she battles what she perceives as the ultimate

silence of death with screams that affirm not only her continuing existence but her voice and identity as well.

Yet though Miranda's penultimate dream suggests that she finally acknowledges family influence as crucial to her identity and agonizes over its destruction through war's effects, still the insight is isolated and developed neither here nor in the final Miranda text, "Holiday." This does not mean, however, that Miranda again rejects her heritage or no longer values relationship in general; rather, these seem even more crucial to her identity now. Thus though she may only now come to terms with her relationship to family, she has evidently, in the six years which intervene from "Old Mortality" to "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," cultivated other relationships, recognizing the centrality of relationality to her identity.

Intriguingly, in this text Porter goes a step further in her treatment of relationality, suggesting that it is more necessary to a woman's identity needs than to a man's. In fact, "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" is the only one of her texts which explicitly delineates this and other distinctions between male and female identities, though "The Grave" does touch on these differences. This she accomplishes by contrasting Miranda with both Adam and Chuck, her co-worker at the newspaper office. Foremost among these distinctions, as has been suggested, is Miranda's need for relationship which is contrasted with

Adam's association with "things" and Chuck's emphasis on formulas over feelings. Miranda's need runs so deep that she must even turn back to look at people she says goodbye to, "as if that would save too rude and too sudden a snapping of even the lightest bond" (284). It extends, of course, to areas of far greater consequence as well; her valuation of relation is responsible even for her demotion from a "real reporter" to a "routine female job" as theater critic (274), a result of her (and Towney's) decision to withhold a story of a botched elopement in order to spare the feelings of those involved. It is a simple and natural choice for them both--"neither of them could see what else they could possibly have done"--which reveals the centrality of relationship to their identities. Their male co-workers, however, do not share their values, disparaging their choice as a typically female response: they are "nice girls, but fools" (275), an attitude which is also implied through their relegation to "routine female jobs," presumably more suited to their natures as women. And, since both their jobs--Towney as society editor, Miranda as theater critic--require their personal involvement with other people's lives and work, perhaps they are indeed more "appropriate." Neither, of course, stresses the distance and objectivity required of them as "real" reporters.

Miranda's interest in preserving relationship appears again in the episode with the "hooper" whose play she

reviews negatively. Her comments to him all downplay her authority and are designed to avoid confrontation, and when her efforts fail, Miranda's identity, represented by her memory and her name, suffers a disintegrating blow: "'I'd like to sit down here on the curb, Chuck, and die, and never again see--I wish I could lose my memory and forget my own name . . .'" (289). Chuck, by contrast, responds to the hooper callously, dismissing his concerns and depersonalizing him by giving him a communal identity, making him an undistinguishable part of a crowd. "'Toughen up, Miranda. This is no time to cave in. Forget that fellow. For every hundred people in show business, there are ninety-nine like him'" (289). Instead, Chuck advocates a businesslike system of rules, a set formula, which compartmentalizes people and regards them as means through which to accomplish his own ends.

'But you don't manage right, anyway. . . . All you have to do is play up the headliners, and you needn't even mention the also-rans. Try to keep in mind that Rypinsky has got show business cornered in this town; please Rypinsky and you'll please the advertising department, please them and you'll get a raise. Hand-in-glove, my poor dumb child, will you never learn?' (289)

Adam appears as perhaps an even more decided contrast to Miranda in this respect. Though he is, of course, involved in a relationship with Miranda, he nevertheless appears to value independence and singularity above all else. Even his uniforms, which by definition are designed to encourage a group identity and which in fact are "as

tough and unyielding in cut as a strait jacket" (279) Adam has custom-tailored to precisely fit him alone, accentuating his individuality. Like Chuck, his mind operates analytically, best capable of understanding logic, rules, and concrete realities, exemplified by the engineering textbooks which he loves, and he struggles with the sometimes illogical, contextual, and emotionally demanding relationality. Most tellingly, he feels most secure in his identity when surrounded by things: in particular, machines. The language Porter uses to describe his relation to his "machinery" emphasizes his singularity and self-possession. "He had showed her snapshots of himself at the wheel of his roadster; of himself sailing a boat, looking very free and windblown, all angles, hauling on the ropes" (285--emphases mine). Miranda believes that these connections are only a facade, that she has access to Adam's "real" self which is apart from these "things," but her claims are unconvincing, even somewhat inconsistent with the whole portrait we see of Adam.

Miranda knew he was trying to tell her what kind of person he was when he had his machinery with him. She felt she knew pretty well what kind of person he was, and would have liked to tell him that if he thought he had left himself at home in a boat or an automobile, he was much mistaken. (286)

This difference is consistent with Carol Gilligan's findings. In her study, In a Different Voice, Gilligan reports that her female subjects far more often than male

prioritized relationship. According to Gilligan, men value "separation as it defines and empowers the self," while women seek "attachment that creates and sustains the human community" (156). She further argues that logic and law characterize men's sense of morality, while community and relationship comprise women's (29).

Another contrast between male and female identity which Porter points out is Adam's easy separation of a private, felt self from a public self and Miranda's inability to split herself into components, an act made impossible by her sense of responsibility to others; her urge for integration and wholeness may also prohibit her self-division. Thus Miranda feels guilty when she, as a function of her job as a newspaperwoman, encourages women to be self-sacrificial for the war effort when she herself does not sacrifice and in fact eschews the whole concept of women choosing to suffer for men's sakes, an attitude demonstrated even in "Old Mortality." Adam, however, sees no hypocrisy in the two positions. Responding to Miranda's confession that she composes articles "'advising other young women to knit and roll bandages and do without sugar and help win the war,'" Adam replies "with the easy masculine morals in such questions," "'Oh, well . . . that's merely your job, that doesn't count'" (281).

Gilligan's findings again reinforce Porter's position here. Gilligan notes that women's problem solving is

"contextual and narrative," while men's is more "formal and abstract." Men's morality is concerned largely with fairness, which is based on rights and rules; women's morality, by contrast, primarily emphasizes care, in which responsibility and relationship factor heavily (19). Mary Belenky, et al., whose work is indebted to Gilligan's, come to a similar conclusion, agreeing that emotion, because it is personal and relational, is more valued by women than by men; thinking, which is more impersonal and abstract, is emphasized more by men (6).

A third dissimilarity is that of voice. Throughout the Miranda stories, but most insistently here and in "Holiday," Porter deals with Miranda's search for an independent, yet relational, voice. In this search she struggles closer to achieving what most of Welty's female protagonists are successful in attaining. For nearly all of Porter's other female characters, however, independence seems unable to survive within relationship.

That voice is a preoccupation of Miranda's in both her waking and dreaming hours in this text reveals how essential it is to her deepest sense of self, pervading even her unconscious dream states. The influenza to which Miranda falls victim especially attacks and inhibits her voice, making it "small and thin" (282), and necessitates a very real effort on Miranda's part to preserve what remains. Significantly, Miranda does not value voice merely for its

own sake--that is, for its ability to "make noise" or to simply assert existence (though, when she is nearest to losing all voice and this is all she is capable of accomplishing, she exploits this option; Dr. Hildesheim, following one of Miranda's delirious screaming "fits," comments, "'at least you take it out in shouting. You don't try to get out of bed and go running around'" [309]).

Instead, Miranda regards voice as an enunciation of her subjectivity, a power through which she wards off her own destruction, and most importantly, the means through which she creates connection with others. These functions blend in nearly every mention of voice in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider."

Miranda watches, anguished, as influenza de-enunciates her voice, corrupting her purposeful self-expression into meaningless babble, a horrifying semiotic which she can neither control nor understand. To the interns who take her to the hospital, Miranda asserts, "'I know what I want to say,'" yet "to her horror she heard herself babbling nonsense, knowing it was nonsense though she could not hear what she was saying" (307). This traumatizes Miranda because it de-composes herself as a speaking subject, severs the connections that words can create between herself and other human beings, and is a prelude to the silence which she regards as a final annihilation of identity. All these concerns are present well before illness has nearly absorbed

her. Stepping into the silent, moving herd of people leaving a theater, Miranda recognizes the disconnection and dehumanization caused by their complacent silence:

What did I ever know about them? There must be a great many of them here who think as I do, and we dare not say a word to each other of our desperation, we are speechless animals letting ourselves be destroyed, and why? (291)

These same fears dominate Miranda's dreams. The "lank greenish stranger" of her opening dream is most frightening because of his absolute silence, his "blank still stare of mindless malice" which "regard[s] her without meaning" (270), evidence of the true nothingness of his identity. Interestingly, Miranda's description of the bond salesman, one with "lightless eyes" and the other with a stare "really stony, really viciously cold" (272) indicates that she sees them also as empty, their personal identities entirely absorbed by their roles as war spokesmen--all three lack the "unwinking angry point of light" which determinedly burns on in her.

Miranda's second dream, that of the docked ship backed by jungle, is, by contrast, filled with voices, yet they remain only as sound, signifying nothing. "The air trembled with the shattering scream and the hoarse bellow of voices all crying together, rolling and colliding above her like ragged storm-clouds" (299). The two words--danger and war--which gradually emerge from this confusion remain meaningless to her because they are disorderly, "rising and

falling and clamoring about her head," becoming, upon her waking, indistinguishable from the frantic and wordless screams of Miss Hobbe, Miranda's landlady.

While these dreams primarily emphasize the loss of voice as annihilative of internal order and meaning, as destructive of the subjectivity which depends on and creates that order, and of the core identity which preserves both voice and subjectivity, Miranda's third dream principally considers the breakdown and loss of relationship which results when voice is suppressed and stripped of human emotion and care. The "inhuman and concealed voices" (304-05--emphasis mine) of this dream become the sound of arrows which repeatedly pierce and kill Adam, though he is resurrected after each death. When Miranda, in the dream, uses her own body as a shield for Adam, the arrows pass through her and kill Adam, this time permanently. This dream of course prefigures Miranda's role in Adam's actual death, since he dies of the influenza he contracted while nursing her, and makes graphic the guilt she feels ("every branch and leaf and blade of grass had its own terrible accusing voice"). It is even more interesting, however, for its implication that voice bereft of human feeling or voice which remains unpronounced can destroy what is most precious, expressing again Porter's belief that deliberate, selfish words and unprotesting silence are equally dangerous.

Importantly, Miranda feels a strong need to sort out her dream by discussing it with Adam, and in so doing she rebuilds the relationality which in the dream is destroyed. Their live, beating hearts which in the dream are penetrated by an arrow, leaving Adam dead, are transformed, as Miranda re-creates the dream for Adam, into "two hearts carved on a tree, pierced by the same arrow"; the deadly arrows whining like "inhuman and concealed voices" become Cupid's arrows, implanting love. Not only does this act reveal Miranda's need to preserve relationship and through it her own stable identity, but it also shows her determination to use voice to accomplish these ends. These same needs later compel her to want repeated the words of Adam's note which connect her with him. "'Oh, read it again, what does it say?' she called out over the silence that pressed upon her, reaching towards the dancing words that just escaped as she almost touched them" (307).

A final episode which illustrates the value Miranda places upon the emotive and relational function of language is the scene she witnesses at the restaurant. She observes an isolated couple sharing an unknown but common grief and Miranda envies their ability to communicate their pain in a language that does not require verbalization. There is an intimacy, a natural and unembarrassed freedom of emotion in their "conversation" which Miranda perceives immediately but of which she cannot be a part.

She envied that girl. At least she can weep if that helps, and he does not even have to ask, What is the matter? Tell me. . . . it was enviable, enviable, that they could sit quietly together and have the same expression on their faces while they looked into the hell they shared, no matter what kind of hell, it was theirs, they were together.
(296)

Though of course this scene could be read differently, as the couple's effort, through silence, to avoid the difficulties of language and speech, this is not Miranda's interpretation. She clearly regards their nonverbal dialogue as intuitive and unrestricted by words.

This scene is especially privileged through contrast with the talk Miranda overhears at another table. Here, a woman's garrulousness, talk which Miranda significantly identifies (and dismisses) as a story, prohibits communication with her companion and merely fills space with meaningless chatter; Miranda, in fact, does not even allow the story its conclusion, but cuts off the woman's speech mid-sentence, further emphasizing its lack of urgency and import.

Interestingly, seemingly only Miranda, not Adam, notices these scenes. This is perhaps because Adam is interested only in connection which affects him directly, is a concrete and immediate reality to him. Neither is he drawn to language, but prefers a kind of manly assertion or action as a means of expressing himself. Thus, he is uncomfortable verbalizing his feelings, finding it difficult even to speak generally of happiness or love: "'Weren't you

ever--happy?' asked Adam, and he was plainly afraid of the word; he was shy of it as he was of the word love, he seemed never to have spoken it before, and was uncertain of its sound or meaning" (302). Evidently, Adam even regards direct address as an intimacy. "She spoke his name often, and he spoke hers rarely. The little shock of pleasure the sound of her name in his mouth gave her stopped her answer" (294).

The contrast between Miranda's and Adam's use of language is even more sharply pointed out in a scene which takes place only hours later. Moved by the urgency that her illness presses upon her, Miranda verbalizes the love which cannot for her be a full reality until it is formulated into words, conveyed to Adam. Adam's response reveals that action, not voice, is his primary means of expression: he lies down beside her, folding her in his embrace, and says, "'Can you hear what I am saying? . . . What do you think I have been trying to tell you all this time?'" (304--emphases mine). It is worth noting, however, that Miranda's expression of love has a clear and significant effect upon Adam. From this point on, Adam's speech is punctuated with terms of endearment and he is even able to say "'I love you,'" now certain "of its sound [and] meaning."

However different Miranda's identity as a woman and Adam's identity as a man are, they still both can be--and are--equally corrupted and disrupted by the war. Their

differences, however, do determine the types of disruption each faces.

Sandra Gibert and Susan Gubar, in Sexchanges, suggest that women benefitted from World War I in numerous ways. They cite the decrease in male prominence in society, professions newly available to women, the release of female sexuality and power, and a new community of women as just some of the positive by-products of war (263-64). Miranda, however, enjoys none of these benefits; instead, she struggles to preserve her subjectivity, voice, and relationality in the midst of a war which systematically destroys them all. As Anne Goodwyn Jones points out, Miranda can see "the corrupt fictions that sustain both war and traditional gender arrangements" ("Gender and the Great War" 143). To Miranda, the war does not expand women's possibilities but more tightly constricts them. Miranda bitterly denounces the objectifying effects of war on women and women's dutiful, unquestioning acquiescence to sacrificial roles.

Bread will win the war. Work will win, sugar will win, peach pits will win the war. Nonsense. Not nonsense, I tell you, there's some kind of valuable high explosive to be got out of peach pits. So all the happy housewives hurry during the canning season to lay their baskets of peach pits on the altar of their country. It keeps them busy and makes them feel useful, and all these women running wild with the men away are dangerous, if they aren't given something to keep their little minds out of mischief. So rows of young girls, the intact cradles of the future, with their pure serious faces framed becomingly in Red Cross wimples, roll cock-eyed bandages that will never reach a base hospital, and knit

sweaters that will never warm a manly chest, their minds dwelling lovingly on all the blood and mud and the next dance at the Acanthus Club for the officers of the flying corps. (290)

Yet Miranda, for all her virulent disgust for such domestic dutifulness, is not herself entirely successful in avoiding such definition; she too joins a cluster of women "to cheer the brave boys" in local hospitals (275), though she clearly does not delight in her restorative, maternal role as Gilbert and Gubar claim most women in a wartime nursing capacity did (Sexchanges 287). This is not to suggest, of course, that nurturance and care have no value for Miranda, but only that enforced civic duty is unappealing. Perhaps Miranda most despises these visits because in the outwardly "presentable" but actually wounded soldiers she recognizes her own divided emotional state. This is certainly her response to the bitter soldier to whom she presents her gifts of tobacco, candy, and flowers. Imagining him as displaced, even disembodied, separated from his "realness" "in life," Miranda muses upon her own bifurcated self.

She could not place him at all, she could not imagine where he came from nor what sort of being he might have been 'in life' . . . It is like turning a corner absorbed in your painful thoughts and meeting your state of mind embodied, face to face, she said. 'My own feelings about this whole thing, made flesh.' (277)

Distinctly echoing her earlier cry, "'Where are my own people and my own time?'" (219), Miranda six years later still feels lost and fragmented, now as a result of the

alienating force of war. As trapped in her role as nurse-mate as she was by her role of wife years earlier and feeling as alone and dislocated in the carload of chattering women leaving the hospitals as she did on the lonely car ride to her childhood home, Miranda still seeks integration and wholeness.

It is to Miranda's credit, however, that she does not continue to passively submit to an activity that increases her sense of fragmentation and loss but openly expresses her contempt for it (277) and refuses to play a series of parts which would further fracture her core self, acting which Towney accomplishes with ease. Contrasting Towney's earlier refusal to sacrifice all for "the boys" by knitting a sweater for herself with her later patriotic gung-ho, Miranda notes "Towney does well at this . . . Towney was now all open-faced glory and goodness, willing to sacrifice herself for her country" (286).

This same desire to retain her subjectivity also motivates her to stand firm against the extreme pressure to buy Liberty Bonds. Though she could technically afford the bonds through weekly installments, she would be left with only a few cents from her paycheck, a condition Miranda will not allow because she vows "to have a few things besides" (271) for herself. The same logic influenced her buying an expensive coat the year earlier: she will not entirely deny her own desires, but affirms her own worth (278). Just as

important in her decision is her refusal to trade her independent identity for a group identity. By buying a bond, she becomes only another member of a faceless crowd, a "loyal American doing her duty" (273), and comes perilously close, in her estimation, to losing her identity altogether, as the bonds salesmen with their "lightless eyes," stony stares, and "nondescript" features have already done (272). The gender tables are turned in her encounters with the bondsmen: rather than Miranda being one of the "bloodthirsty female[s]" (290) who pins white feathers on noncombatant men, Miranda herself symbolically receives a white feather of disapproval and ostracism from the bondsmen.

A crucial element of her subjectivity which is threatened by the war is her sense of voice: at times, Miranda stands "desperately silent" (273) before the bondsmen, the political representatives of the war, and Miranda notes that "the worst thing about war for the stay-at-homes is there isn't anyone to talk to any more" (290). Miranda is painfully aware that women in particular are singled out for voicelessness, expected to quietly and obediently perform the nurturing and supportive tasks which they as women are "designed" for: "keeping still and quiet will win the war" (290). A perhaps even more horrible alternative to complete voicelessness is to appropriate the "voice of war," the voice Miranda hears daily during

theatrical intermissions, as one's own. Using "the same old moldy speech with the same old dusty backdrop" (293), the voice of war drones on, the words so repetitious and meaningless that they nearly become a chant, a mere collection of words lacking conviction and force but so abounding in sappy sentimentalism that even horrifying images used by the speakers, such as "innocent babes hoisted on Boche bayonets" become mere abstractions, divorced from feeling and reality.

It is precisely this erasure of compassionate feeling and emotion which is the most terrifying result of war to Miranda. In this regard, the physical pain inflicted by influenza becomes a metaphor for the internal disintegration caused by war. "'I have pains,'" Miranda wants to cry to Adam, "'in my chest and my head and my heart and they're real. I am in pain all over, and you are in such danger as I can't bear to think about, and why can we not save each other?'" (296). Directly attacking intellect (head) and emotion (heart), the two elements Miranda most depends upon to integrate her core self, war has the potential to destroy her very being, a concept she tries to express to Adam.

'The worst of war is the fear and suspicion and the awful expression in all the eyes you meet. . . as if they had pulled down the shutters over their minds and their hearts and were peering out at you, ready to leap if you make one gesture or say one word they do not understand instantly. . . . It's what war does to the mind and the heart, Adam, and you can't separate these two--what it does to them is worse than what it can do to the body.' (294)

Significantly, Miranda's and Adam's identity needs differ in this respect as well. In contrast to Miranda's emotional and relational needs, Adam's needs center far more upon the body and the ability to act which a wholeness of body allows. Adam's reply is, "'Oh, yes, but suppose one comes back whole? The mind and heart sometimes get another chance, but if anything happens to the poor old human frame, why, it's just out of luck, that's all'" (294). Miranda wants to remove herself from the war because of the damage it may do to self; Adam willingly enlists in the war because to remain apart from it would do damage to his identity. Contrasting his ability to act with the speech-maker's stasis, Adam comments, "'It's not his fault . . . he can't do anything but talk.' His pride in his youth, his forbearance and tolerance and contempt for that unlucky being breathed out of his very pores as he strolled, straight and relaxed in his strength" (294--emphasis mine). Clearly, Adam's ability to act, and the war which allows him to, are bodily needs for him, his action and strength innate aspects of his masculine identity. "'If I didn't go,' said Adam, in a matter-of-fact voice, 'I couldn't look myself in the face'" (295).

Chuck, too, identifies war activity as a male need--"'I think the women should keep out of it. . . . They just add skirts to the horrors of war'" (286)--and claims that it too is central to his identity as a man--"'I could have been

there and back with a leg off by now. . . . Let [soldiers] perish where they fall. That's what they're there for" (286, 287).

Chuck claims to regard war as an opportunity to confirm his manhood through the action and aggressiveness which are presumably characteristic of men. If death comes as a result, it is a fate men are equal to. The irony of Chuck's comment, of course, lies in the fact that Chuck himself, because of his weak lungs, is "'not going to be there'" nor does he really seem to want to be (290). Thus, by his logic, he is twice "unmanned" by war (Gilbert and Gubar, Sexchanges 260): once by his lack of active participation, twice by his lack of remorse.

Given Miranda's fear of losing feeling, voice, subjectivity, and most crucially, relationality, she quite naturally is drawn to Adam, for all these receive expression--and are thus affirmed--in and through her relationship with him. In fact, as Anne Goodwyn Jones notes, their relationship may actually increase her subjectivity and reverse traditional gender roles, for Adam plans his day around Miranda's schedule, Miranda controls their dates by taking Adam to plays she must review, and it is Adam who nurses Miranda back to health ("Gender and the Great War" 144).

Further, Adam reinforces the solidity of Miranda's core identity through his own solid, unified sense of self, even

if that solidity is achieved through different means than hers. Even Miranda's perception of Adam's physical traits reflects her need for an integrated wholeness for herself. "He was wearing his new uniform, and he was all olive and tan and tawny, hay colored and sand colored from hair to boots" (278). Miranda does not lose her own identity in him, but she does unquestionably draw on his strength to bolster her own. Her identity--separate, distinct, and individual--is enlivened by their relationship. He is, in short, the "fine healthy apple" (280) which keeps illness away, not the fruit which initiates death. A sign of this is that Miranda's voice, the hallmark of her subjectivity, is not lessened by the relationship she shares with Adam, but given added dimension and fullness. Together, she feels, they have "the right tone" (281), and even the ability to speak in a language which is not limited by words. "They said nothing but smiled continually at each other, odd changing smiles as though they had found a new language" (296).

Yet though Miranda's identity is not subsumed in Adam's, their relationship becomes essential, she believes, to the unity of her self. Fear of what damage may be done to her identity through the loss of her relationship with Adam causes her to claim, "'I don't want to love'" (292), yet she makes no effort to distance herself from him. She has established for herself a sort of double bind: by

involving herself in relationship, she faces the possibility of personal disintegration if the relationship fails; to deny herself relationality, however, would create a similar void. Miranda realizes, then, that her relationship with Adam is a risk, but a necessary one, allowing her to complete her above thought by saying "' . . . there is no time and we are not ready for it and yet this is all we have'" (292--emphasis mine). Certainly this is a leap beyond Miranda's sentiments of age eighteen, when she declared "I hate love . . . I hate loving and being loved, I hate it" (220, 221), believing it is love which constricts rather than constructs her identity.

Unquestionably, Miranda re-conceives the role of relationship, voice, and her position as an autonomous subject to her sense of identity. These she shapes into compatibility with each other, molds and forms them to create an integrated core of identity for herself. She imagines her identity as an entity suspended motionless between the past and future, though that balance and centering is threatened by the war and the influenza which is an aspect of war's disintegrating effects. Her illness threatens to snap the "tough filaments of memory and hope pulling taut backwards and forwards holding her upright between them" (304). Thus she makes "a continual effort to bring together and unite firmly the disturbing oppositions in her day-to-day existence" (271), hoping that by this act

she can pull the past (memory) and the future (hope) into a reconciliation with her present. Even the linearity of her existence can thus be drawn toward a center.

Her mind, split in two, acknowledged and denied what she saw in the one instant, for across an abyss of complaining darkness her reasoning coherent self watched the strange frenzy of the other coldly, reluctant to admit the truth of its visions, its tenacious remorse and despairs.
(309-10)

A more terrifying possibility than a fragmented identity, however, is an obliterated one, a destruction of even this solid core of being which Miranda fears is the inevitable consequence of death. Death, to Miranda, "has no attributes" (310); it has only "the blank still stare of mindless malice" (270) personified in the pale stranger of her first dream. These are the same horrifying associations Miranda makes with death at age nine, when in "The Grave" she watches her brother strip away the layers which protect the baby rabbits, revealing them finally as "little blind faces almost featureless" (366--emphases mine).

Predictably, given her valorization of voice, Miranda attempts to use language to name the lack, and to thereby give it substance and attributes. "Oblivion, thought Miranda, her mind feeling among her memories of words she had been taught to describe the unseen, the unknowable, is a whirlpool of gray water turning upon itself for all eternity" (310). As she moves closer to death, she believes even this effort to be futile: "soft carefully shaped words

like oblivion and eternity are curtains hung before nothing at all" (310), she concludes.

Yet the "beatific vision" of death which Miranda experiences reveals to her a far different reality, one which establishes identity as surviving even beyond death in a purer, even more essential form. The aspects which in life comprise and shape her identity and are necessary to it--human subjectivity, voice, relationality--are seen in death as encumbrances to an identity which exists in its own world of perfect subjectivity.

. . . she lay like a stone at the farthest bottom of life, knowing herself to be blind, deaf, speechless, no longer aware of the members of her own body, entirely withdrawn from all human concerns, yet alive with a peculiar lucidity and coherence; . . . all ties of blood . . . dissolved and fell away from her, and there remained of her only a minute fiercely burning particle of being that knew itself alone, that relied upon nothing beyond itself for its strength; . . . this fiery motionless particle set itself unaided to resist destruction, to survive and to be in its own madness of being, motiveless and planless beyond that one essential end. Trust me, the hard unwinking angry point of light said. Trust me. I stay. (310-11)

What happens next to this "hard unwinking angry point of light" presents Miranda with possibilities she has in life not even considered but which now seem "as if some promise made to her had been kept long after she had ceased to hope for it" (311): the singular particle "grew, flattened, thinned to a fine radiance, spread like a great fan and curved out into a rainbow" (311). This spectrum of color and the beautiful world of blue seas and green meadows

which it overarches stand in marked contrast to the "white fog" of her fourth dream, the frightening white sameness of her hospital room (308), and even the unwinking singularity of the "point of light" which represents her identity. This transformation suggests to her a startling new possibility that identity need not be singular, constant, and self-contained, but may be plural, mutable, and interactive, while still retaining an integrity of self and refusing objectification.

Thus the faces of the "great company of human beings" which Miranda sees in her dream each have "their own beauty"; the limitations of roles and the definitions of objectification do not burden them: they are "pure identities and she knew them every one without calling their names or remembering what relation she bore to them." This knowledge ("she knew them") is of course of a different order than the human intellect she depends on in life to define her self, but it is not a removal from relationship, as Thomas Walsh seems to suggest ("Dream Self" 91). She can be a part of them, enjoying a perfect unity which is suggested by the "warmth which flowed evenly from sea and sky and meadow," yet remain individual, "within touch but not touching." Miranda's earlier definition of her identity as solitary, balanced between two linear points of reference, past and future, is here reformulated using the more feminine image of a fluctuating and relational circle.

"The drifting circle widened, separated, and each figure was alone but not solitary" (311).

Yet there is something about her vision which will not allow it to remain--at least not for Miranda and not now. For now, the beautiful multiplicity of identity which the dream presents as a possibility is for Miranda both unrealistic and distinctly associated with only the future, as is suggested by the absence of the dead in her dream (312). Perhaps part of Miranda's recognition here is that life includes (Walsh, "Dream Self" 92); her sense, therefore, that she cannot remain in her visionary world may be the first stirrings of an awakening multiplicity in her self--an acceptance of all life has to offer, positive and negative.

Thus Miranda feels she must return, though unwillingly, to the bleak world of reality where all stands as a threat to her tenuously ordered core of identity. Torn away from her beatific vision by the "life-saving" efforts of Dr. Hildesheim and Miss Tanner, Miranda watches with grief as the fiery spark which initiated her dream now becomes "heavy fire" in her veins; the expressive, peaceful silence is replaced with her own voice, reduced to "incoherent sounds of animal suffering" and the clashing violence of "bells scream[ing] all off key, wrangling together as they collided in mid air, horns and whistles mingl[ing] shrilly with cries of human distress"; and most horribly, the beautiful

spectrum of the rainbow is corrupted into the exploding "sulphur colored light" of the Armistice fireworks (312).

Understandably, Miranda cannot appreciate re-entry into life which by contrast with the perfect existence of her vision seems no life at all. Miranda senses that her identity is somehow altered, yet the disorientation of illness and her long-established, singular way of regarding herself do not allow her to respond to that change. Her female body is what she first experiences as foreign. In her dream, unencumbered by a physical body, she could move easily through the landscapes and among the "pure identities"; in post-war reality, Miranda muses that "the body is a curious monster, no place to live in, how could anyone feel at home there?" (313) and speaks of her frame as an "inseparable rack of bones and wasted flesh" (314). Unable to recognize even her face as her own, Miranda does what she has done throughout "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" whenever her identity itself feels diminished and threatened: she re-creates a face through makeup to establish again a familiar sense of herself (278, 282).

Anne Goodwyn Jones reads this application of makeup as a "lie of gender" which Miranda feels she must participate in to re-enter the living world ("Gender and the Great War" 145). Thomas Walsh sees Miranda's wearing of makeup as a disguise which enables her to live in the world but not as a part of it (93). Yet it seems important that Miranda wears

makeup--and the gloves and hose she asks Towney to buy--for the sake of her identity's reconstruction, not for a face she wants--even needs--to present to the world. It is a private act, to make up for the losses she has suffered in her self.

Voice, too, is irreparably altered by her experience. Possessing neither the determined, subjective voice which she struggled to retain during her physical decline nor the perfect silent language she shared at moments with Adam and claimed entirely in her beatific vision, Miranda can only speak in "bare phrases," like "an alien who does not like the country in which he finds himself, does not understand the language nor wish to learn it" (313).

Most damaged, however, is the relationality which Miranda has just begun to come to terms with as an essential element of her identity. The hospital attendants move in a distant, mechanical haze around her; her conversations with Chuck and Mary are punctuated with "uneasy pause[s]" and with Miranda's lies designed to hide the disconnection she feels with the living; she shows no interest in the letters written to her, finding it impossible to rouse feeling in herself for those who wish her well: "her hardened, indifferent heart shuddered in despair at itself, because before it had been tender and capable of love" (315). The greatest blow to her relational self, a blow which is not softened by her expecting it, is that delivered by Adam's

death. It is implied, in fact, that Miranda's vague awareness of Adam's absence in her paradisaical dream ("We have forgotten the dead, oh, the dead, where are they? [312]) is her sole motive for allowing her resurrection: "What do you think I came back for, Adam, to be deceived like this?" (317)

Yet her own feeling of loss causes her to inflict upon herself an even greater deception. So intensely does her identity need this connection with Adam that she allows herself to believe that she can regain him.

At once he was there beside her, invisible but urgently present, a ghost but more alive than she was, the last intolerable cheat of her heart; for knowing it was false she still clung to the lie, the unpardonable lie of her bitter desire. (317)

Her newly re-inhabited world of human will and human speech, however, cannot conjure Adam from death but rather distances him even more irrevocably, for his invisible presence is "struck away by the sudden violence of her rising and speaking aloud" (317). Her vow to never again recall him to mind in this way again is not a rejection of Adam or of her memory of him, but a simple refusal to replace reality with lies. Rosaleen, of "The Cracked Looking-Glass," makes a similar decision at the close of that story.

The picture we have of Miranda at the close of "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" is indeed bleak. Margaret Bolsterli, partially because she considers "Pale Horse" to be the final Miranda story, but also because she takes a dim view of

Miranda's subjectivity throughout her article, leaves Miranda with only these barren prospects, with no movement beyond her circumstances ("Bound' Characters" 100). Yet Porter does, even in this text, allow for the possibility of change. Herself having experienced the illness and beatific vision which she passes on to Miranda, Porter commented on the alteration of perspective and condition it effected in her:

It just simply divided my life, cut across it like that. So that everything before that was just getting ready, and after that I was in some strange way altered, ready. . . . Now if you have had that [beatific vision], and survived it, come back from it, you are no longer like other people, and there's no use deceiving yourself that you are. But you see, I did: I made the mistake of thinking I was quite like anybody else, of trying to live like other people. It took me a long time to realize that that simply wasn't true, that I had my own needs and that I had to live like me. (ConvP 85)

Perhaps at the end of this story Miranda too makes the mistake of believing that she must conform again to the world of reality and hold to her lifelong perception of her identity as a core which strives to integrate, not expand, thus excepting the broader possibilities she is introduced to in her vision. Though Shirley Scott disparages the significance of Porter's new vision by saying that in it there is "nothing like a new insight, an 'otherworldliness,' or a new power, but simply alienation and a greater degree of what seems to have been a nearly congenital need for autonomy" (46), these latter changes can of course be seen

as more empowering than the "'otherworldliness'" Scott seeks. For it is this autonomy and individuality (not alienation, as Scott says) which enable Miranda's eventual reconception of her identity.

What Miranda's twenty-four years of experience, and her vision, prepare her for is the far less dramatically described yet nevertheless important realization she comes to in "Holiday," the last of the Miranda stories: that the "hard unwinking angry point of light" can "spread like a great fan and [curve] out into a rainbow," expanding to include fluid and multiple possibilities for her identity as a woman, no longer confined to the realm of dreams.

This conception of identity represents a radical departure from Porter's previous definition of female identity as a core of being which resists change, rejects possibilities which do not fit a rigidly defined self, and strives for coherence and integration rather than an openness to a range of possibilities. This fact may possibly account for Porter's difficulty in settling on a final draft form for "Holiday." In a letter to Monroe Wheeler, Porter describes her forty-year effort to come to terms with the story:

'Holiday' is based on something that happened to me when I was twenty. At thirty I started trying to write it. At intervals for the next ten years I made three drafts, all rejected by me. Last spring in turning over my papers, I found it and started working on it again. I realized then that except for the very crux of the matter, I had done the story in the first draft. So I used that and threaded in as I went along the things I was

unable to say so long ago, and got it said somehow without disturbing the shape or tone or pace or direction of the original story. (Letters 579--emphasis in original)

Porter does not explicitly identify Miranda as the narrator and protagonist of "Holiday," but several clues given in the story make a solid case for this assumption. For example, the story takes place in Texas, Miranda's home state, and elsewhere the narrator speaks of "her South" (414), indicating her upbringing in this region. More convincingly, the narrator's condition at the opening of the story closely parallels Miranda's own at the close of "Pale Horse, Pale Rider." The first sentence of the text states that

at that time I was too young for some of the troubles I was having, and I had not yet learned what to do with them. . . . It seemed to me then there was nothing to do but run away from them, though all my tradition, background, and training had taught me unanswerably that no one except a coward ever runs away from anything. (407)

Here the attitudes instilled by upbringing echo those which Miranda has been exposed to, and the "troubles" which the narrator alludes to could very well be the losses Miranda suffers in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider." Additionally, the narrator of "Holiday" demonstrates Miranda's preoccupations with truth, order, relationality, and voice, among others, and conceives of identity identically, as a core which craves integration. Most convincingly, however, the process begun in Miranda in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" is continued here in "Holiday," with Miranda's gradual

reconceptualization of identity as multiple, using imagery nearly identical to that to which Miranda is exposed in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider." All these factors will be delineated through an analysis of the text.

Of Porter's entire fictional corpus, only "Hacienda" and "Holiday" employ first person narration; "Holiday" is the only Miranda story to use this perspective, enabling in this final story a point of view which gives Miranda herself the voice to tell her own story. The story she relates is a familiar one, describing a fragmented self which struggles for reintegration and restoration of the losses it has suffered.

I felt divided into many fragments, having left or lost a part of myself in every place I had travelled, in every life mine had touched, above all, in every death of someone near to me that had carried into the grave some part of my living cells. (417)

Characteristically, Miranda keeps this pain to herself, not even sharing it with her friend Louise who arranges her visit to the Mullers', but in fact miniaturizing and concealing it: "I confided to my friend Louise . . . not my troubles but my little problem: I wanted to go somewhere for a spring holiday" (407--emphasis mine). In the details which she notices on her way via spring wagon to the Muller house, however, she unconsciously reveals the extent to which her confused and disordered identity preoccupies her thoughts. For example, Miranda, in her description of the pony's harness, emphasizes its disjointed, tangled, and

inexplicable qualities, doubting its ability to provide directing control to the pony, which in fact it does not, since its looseness allows the pony to shake the bit from its mouth.

It met and clung in all sorts of unexpected places; it parted company in what appeared to be strategic seats of jointure. It was mended sketchily in risky places with bits of hairy rope. Other seemingly unimportant parts were bound together irrevocably with wire. (410)

Like the harness, Miranda's identity is also jumbled and fragmented, yet unlike the pony, Miranda depends upon a unity and coherence of self for normal functioning and cannot go "[her] own way at [her] own pace" as the pony can. Similarly, Miranda focuses on the wheels, which "themselves spun not dully around and around in the way of common wheels, but elliptically, being loosened at the hubs" (410), lacking the controlling, centered tension which her identity also requires. Not coincidentally, Miranda describes the motion of her being carried along as that of "a small boat on a choppy sea."

The bare, dismal winter landscape which Miranda observes on her way to the Mullers' is an external parallel to her own internal barrenness and evokes as well the post-war world she wakes to after her bout with influenza in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," "where the light seemed filmed over with cobwebs, all the bright surfaces corroded, the sharp planes melted and formless, all objects and beings meaningless, ah, dead and withered things that believed

themselves alive!" (314) Yet it is a sign of Miranda's openness to wellness and restoration that she can now see in the bleak fields the promise of spring and that she can metaphorically describe herself in terms of a fallow, yet ready, ground: "It gave me pleasure to think that beyond this there might be something else beautiful in its own being, a river shaped and contained by its banks, or a field stripped down to its true meaning, ploughed and ready for the seed" (410--emphases mine).

Still, however, as the underlined phrases in the passage above indicate, Miranda's drive remains toward integration, containment, and a sort of essential or core self. Nevertheless, the image admits the possibility of change and augments an earlier image Miranda uses immediately upon her arrival to the community, when she describes her surroundings as "mud-colored" and "shapeless," and her own face as feeling like "wet clay" (409), introducing the possibility of her being malleable, willing to be re-formed. Miranda seems aware that she, like the wagon which carries her past the fields, isn't "out of the woods" yet; it is nevertheless appropriate that the first act which involves her in the community labor of the Mullers and initiates her into their relationality is her joining Hatsy in the planting of seeds in the garden (418).

More immediately, however, Miranda is able to make a final positive comment on the hope she sees for the

landscape and for herself in her musings while gazing out the window of the attic room the Mullers have reserved for her. Her thoughts are particularly positive because the bleak view before her can nevertheless evoke memories of spring in her South, "my loved and never-forgotten country" as well as the country of her dream in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider." Her easy combination of the two to describe what is not yet but will be indicates that the process of integration within her has already begun. Importantly, Miranda uses the language of "sickness" and recuperation to describe the movement from winter to spring in the South, creating an explicit parallel to her own near-death experience and recovery only a few months prior.

The brown fields would soon be green again; the sheep washed by the rains and become clean grey. All the beauty of the landscape now was in the harmony of the valley rolling fluently away to the wood's edge. . . . In my south, my loved and never-forgotten country, after her long sickness, with only a slight stirring, an opening of the eyes between one breath and the next, between night and day, the earth revives and bursts into the plenty of spring with fruit and flowers together, spring and summer at once under the hot shimmering blue sky. (414)

The only-imagined green fields of Miranda's view here evoke the "cool green of the meadow" in her dream; the "shimmering blue sky" is the same "shimmering air" which is "freshly washed and glistening with transparencies of blue." The same unbroken fluency of valley rolling into woods is apparent in her dream's unifying warmth which "flow[s]

evenly from sea and sky and meadow," the rolling effect recapturing her dream's movement of waves onto sand (311).

Unquestionably, Miranda looks to her stay with the Mullers to effect this recovery and reintegration. This is evident from her first sight and description of the Muller house. A single yellow light shining from the Muller kitchen (reminiscent of the "hard unwinking angry point of light" of her dream in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider") encourages her to believe again that there is a surviving spark within her, that she can once more feel "warmth and tenderness" (411), though she had previously been convinced that "there was no light, there might never be light again, compared as it must always be with the light she had seen beside the blue sea that lay so tranquilly along the shore of her paradise" (314).

Not surprisingly, what most appeals to Miranda about the Mullers, convincing her to spend her "holiday" with them, is their stone-solid family structure and order. Her own identity disordered and uncertain, Miranda needs the reliable solidity of the Muller family structure and through association with them, slowly begins to reconstruct her own internal order.

Miranda's friend Louise describes them as firmly established in a well-defined hierarchy, "Old father, God Almighty himself, with whiskers and all; Old mother, matriarch in men's shoes; endless daughters and sons and

sons-in-law and fat babies falling about the place" (408), a structure which orders every aspect of their existence, as Miranda discovers upon her arrival. Mr. Muller is the undisputed figurehead of authority, a respected man with affluence and influence who reads Das Kapital with fervor and a selective sense of reality; the mother is the practical center of the family, coordinating the perfect organization of the family unit. The others direct their movement from her centering influence, each performing his or her carefully delineated duties. Even the youngest seem solid in their identities: Miranda describes Annetje's baby as "a compact mound of flannel and calico" (419). At meal times the distinctly patriarchal structure is made most graphic: the father sits at the head of the table; the other men occupy one side, their wives standing behind them to serve them during the meal, babies astride their hips; the other side is filled with children, with Hatsy, the oldest "maiden," overseeing them.

As Anne Goodwyn Jones, in her reading of "Holiday" as a critique of Agrarian theories of values, points out, Porter presents this structure as "constrictive rather than enabling." It constructs "the same human subject with the same lack of choices; the women, in particular, act with deference and submission but provide the actual backbone of the community" ("Gender of Agrarianism" 11). The family's solidity is achieved, therefore, only through their

solidarity: there is no place in this family for autonomy or independent creativity.

At first Miranda wants only solitude and enjoys the "perpetual exile" (413) which the foreignness of the Mullers' German speech allows her; because the loss of relationship has caused her pain, she is unwilling to risk further hurt by involving herself in the lives of the Mullers. Instead, she believes that a self-imposed isolation, a deliberate turning inward, will restore the unity of the core self which has been fractured by the pain of loss. In so doing, she hopes to recapture the expressive, musical silence of her beatific vision, the identity stripped of roles and expectations, the relationship to the self which allows perfect subjectivity.

I liked the thick warm voices, and it was good not to have to understand what they were saying. I loved that silence which means freedom from the constant pressure of other minds and other opinions and other feelings, that freedom to fold up in quiet and go back to my own center, to find again, for it is always a rediscovery, what kind of creature it is that rules me finally, makes all the decisions no matter who thinks they make them, even I; who little by little takes everything away except the one thing I cannot live without, and who will one day say, 'Now I am all you have left--take me.' I paused there a good while listening to this muted unknown language which was silence with music in it; I could be moved and touched but not troubled by it, as by the crying of frogs or the wind in the trees. (413--emphases mine)

The language of her reflections here deliberately chooses the core images of her dream: she wants to return to her "own center," to know what "rules [her] finally," to

be a singular, concentrated self, stripped of everything "except the one thing I cannot live without." The "fiercely burning particle of being that knew itself alone," that said "Trust me" (310), now says, "Take me" (413). Miranda has seemingly rejected the plural possibilities for identity suggested through the transformation of particle into rainbow: independence within relationship and voice within silence, identity apart from definition and role. Yet the last sentence of her reflections hints that this is not entirely true. She leaves open the possibility of music in silence, the touch of relationship (recalling her ability in her dream to be "within touch but not touching the serenely smiling familiar beings about her" [311]) and most interestingly, "the crying of frogs," which in "The Fig Tree" is explicitly connected to the idea of multiple identity (361-62).

Miranda does gradually reestablish her connections with others. Initiated by the fleeting touches which accompany her introductions to the family members (411), given direction by Hatsy, who takes Miranda's hand "as if [she] were a child needing a guide" (412), and deepened through Miranda's sharing of household tasks, the "hardened, indifferent heart" with which Miranda is left at the end of "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" (315) is softened and made different. Miranda is easily integrated into this perpetual

and ever-expanding family of eighteen, which marriage does not deplete but increases.

But it is the Mullers' almost literal embodiment of Miranda's core conception of identity which is most restorative to her. Relationality and order fuse nonproblematically for the Mullers in creating their solid and communal identity, whereas Miranda struggles continuously to find a balance between relationality and independence, subjectivity and objectification. Miranda at first seems to believe that the Mullers have perfectly achieved the unified core of being which continues to elude her. Each member is secure in his or her own identity, which is defined through their sex, their consequent roles, and their position in the carefully ordered family hierarchy, yet at the same time they can each enjoy a perfect communal identity. So cohesive is this communal identity that even what sounds like a "pitched battle" to an outsider like Miranda is actually agreement, for "they were united in their tribal scepticisms, as in everything else" (417). Miranda's description of the family as a single entity reinforces their shared center: "I got a powerful impression that they were all, even the sons-in-law, one human being divided into several separate appearances" (417). The physical manifestation of their shared and unified identity is their tilted, "water-clear" blue eyes and their hair, the color of "pulled taffy" (416).

So intensely unified is the Muller identity that it can survive even the most brutal blow to its continued existence. When Mother Muller, the unequivocal center of the family, dies, the family's integration is disrupted, but not destroyed. There are, in the Mullers' response to their mother's inevitable death, echoes of Miranda's family's response to Amy's scandal in "Old Mortality." There,

they sat in the twilight of scandal in their little world, holding themselves very rigidly, in a shared tension as if all their nerves began at a common center. This center had received a blow, and family nerves shuddered. (189)

When first faced with the possibility of their loss, the entire Muller family surrounds Mother Muller's bed, literalizing her position as center. They are "unnerved in panic, lost unless the sick woman should come to herself and tell them what to do for her" (431). Ties of relationship are tangled, order becomes "tumult utterly beyond control," voice itself becomes Babel even within the group itself: Father Muller replaces his native German with broken English, "as if he were a stranger to himself and had forgotten his own language" (431). Their confusion is a human and relational parallel to the violent, destructive storm raging outside.

The extent of Miranda's investment in the Mullers as a centering for her own identity is forcibly illustrated in her response to Mother Muller's death, best shown in her description of the storm-ravaged farm. Significantly,

Miranda describes the ruin inflicted upon the fields and the new blooms, the two images previously paralleled with her own potential growth. Additionally, the woods, which Miranda earlier speaks of needing to pass through before such growth is possible, are described as enlarging and gaining strength from the storm; importantly, the images of her description recall the terrifying details of her second dream in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," in which language is confused and distorted, human relationality is replaced by animal life, and orderly nature is transformed into jungle, "a writhing terribly alive and secret place of death" (299): "In the woods had occurred a violent eruption of ripe foliage of a jungle thickness, glossy and burning, a massing of hot peacock green with cobalt shadows" (431).

Miranda, even as a relative outsider, must consciously struggle against the disintegrating effects upon her identity of Mother Muller's death; by contrast, the Mullers' recovery is nearly unconscious, a natural healing that comes from the strength of an ultimately inviolate communal core they share. In fact, this recovery, this preservation of a family identity, is accomplished by dissolving individual pain into a communal sorrow, which through being shared can eventually be dissipated.

They wept away the hard core of secret trouble that is in the heart of each separate man, secure in a communal grief; in sharing it, they consoled each other. For a while they would visit the grave and remember, and then life would arrange itself again in another order, yet it would be the same. (432-33)

But in contrast to the Mullers, ultimately the recovery which the Mullers accomplish through preservation of a core communal identity is in Miranda effected by her opening of her core self to include multiple possibilities. This choice is ironic, given her previous insistence on an unchanging, solid center of being, yet it is not entirely unexpected. Before "Holiday," a very young Miranda realized the possibility of multiple versions of events and descriptions of people; Great-Aunt Eliza more explicitly introduces her to "'other worlds, a million other worlds'" (361). And Miranda's final dream in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," as has been repeatedly shown, wonderfully encapsulates the visionary possibilities of a fluid and multiple identity. In "Holiday," too, Miranda's final conceptualization of identity is also hinted at. For example, the metaphor of seed growth, of new budding, which Miranda uses to describe her own process of change and recovery, hints of multiple possibilities for her, a gradual yet sudden transformation from a single bare tree to a many-branched profusion of bud and bloom, multiplied over an ever-expanding range. Watching the bare trees and vines for new bloom, Miranda notes that

the changes there were so subtle and gradual I found one day that branches of willows and sprays of blackberry vine alike were covered with fine points of green; the color had changed overnight, or so it seemed, and I knew that tomorrow the whole valley and wood and edge of the river would be quick and feathery with golden green blowing in the winds. (419)

Likewise, the enjoyment Miranda receives from watching the children shift and shed identities in their play--they are alternately children, parents, and horses--forecasts her own eventual ability to allow the existence of otherness within herself (418).

However, the most fitting representation of her movement from conceiving of her identity as a core entity to a plural sense is Miranda's description of the firefly-lit trees.

When I went through the orchard the trees were all abloom with fireflies. . . . I had never seen anything that was more beautiful to me. The trees were freshly budded out with pale bloom, the branches were immobile in the thin darkness, but the flower clusters shivered in a soundless dance of delicately woven light, whirling as airily as leaves in a breeze, as rhythmically as water in a fountain. Every tree was budded out with this living, pulsing fire as fragile and cool as bubbles. When I opened the gate their light shone on my hands like fox fire. When I looked back, the shimmer of golden light was there, it was no dream. (419-20)

No longer confined to her dreams, this many-pointed, "pulsing" multiplicity becomes a part of Miranda's actuality, shown through the glow which suffuses Miranda's hands. The single point of light is multiplied into hundreds, hardness transformed into fragility, unwinking changed to pulsation, which conveys the idea of change and difference.

This transformation in Miranda is gradual yet sudden, brought about through Miranda's blossoming relationship with

Ottillie, the Muller "servant," who is, significantly, "never addressed or introduced as other than her labor function" (Jones, "Gender of Agrarianism" 7). As Suzanne Bunkers aptly points out, the relationship between these two women is central to Miranda's realizations in the story, for the text is ultimately concerned with the need of the individual to know her self and to mend gaps which exist between self and other (118, 130).

Miranda is first intrigued by Ottillie for two reasons. First, she sees in Ottillie's deformed and crippled body the physical manifestation of her own inward distortion, and in her initial description of Ottillie's stumbling movement and twisted features there are echoes of Miranda's response to her own body following her illness in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider": "The body is a curious monster, no place to live in, how could anyone feel at home there?" (313) Miranda remarks, convinced that her body is a poor container for an identity which has just been revealed to her to be inviolate, steady, and indestructible. Secondly, Miranda is troubled by Ottillie's separateness and individuality in a family which is structured by connection and communal identity. Ottillie, as Miranda sees her, is "the only individual in the house. . . . she was whole, and belonged nowhere. . . . nothing could make her seem real, or in any way connected with the life around her" (417, 425). Miranda's inability to make Ottillie "fit" into the web of

Muller connection is troubling enough in her initial reflections upon the woman, but becomes a nearly unhandleable conflict when she discovers that Ottilie is herself a Muller, the oldest daughter of the family. Excluded from family conversation and activity, her very existence barely acknowledged, and her familial connection entirely disregarded, Ottilie is nevertheless integral to her family's daily functioning, providing as she does meals for the clan. This response to difference Jones also identifies as an Agrarian stance: "this Agrarianism places difference--in the form of Ottilie--in a position of strict subwervience and erased subjectivity" (11).

Miranda initially justifies the family's treatment of Ottilie by recognizing it as a defense mechanism: in order to preserve their own solid sense of family identity, they, not the illness which deformed Ottilie, have "stripped [her] of everything but her mere existence," considering her as "something painful that had happened long ago and now was past and done for" (427--emphasis mine).

I remembered how Hatsy had spoken her name but had not said she was her sister. Their silence about her was, I realized, exactly that--simple forgetfulness. She moved among them as invisible to their imaginations as a ghost. . . . they could not live with that memory [of her deforming illness] or its visible reminder--they forgot her in pure self-defense. (427)

Miranda, with her still-strong need to integrate and resolve disorder (in this respect identical to the Mullers), wants to accept the Mullers' handling of Ottilie as

necessary and right: "they with a deep right instinct had learned to live with her disaster on its own terms, and hers; they had accepted and then made use of what was for them only one more painful event in a world full of troubles" (428). Yet for Miranda the conflict cannot be settled so unquestioningly; Otilie has introduced her to the possibility of separation with connection, individuality within relationship, disorder coexistent with order, Otherness within Sameness--incompatibilities which Miranda feels compelled to examine and which two further encounters with Otilie enable her to "resolve" with a logic itself incompatible with her previous conceptualizations.

In short, Miranda reconsiders her earlier assessment of Otilie as "whole," seeing her now as a mutable collection of incompatible aspects. Jones similarly sees Miranda as regarding Otilie as an "[un]stable subject," but argues that Miranda "becomes aware that such an instability is what permits not only relationship but quite possibly the process of subject construction in another woman and oneself" ("Gender of Agrarianism" 12).

The first encounter is initiated by Otilie. Beckoned by Otilie's gaze, for her illness has left her with a "muteness [which] seemed nearly absolute; she had no coherent language of signs" (421), Miranda follows Otilie into her tiny, isolated room, where Otilie shows Miranda a photograph of herself at age five, before her deforming

illness. Urgently struggling to vocalize what can clearly be enunciated only within herself, Ottilie alternately touches the picture and her face; the name, "Ottilie," written on the back and her own mouth. In this moment, Ottilie's "language of signs" is coherent enough, for Miranda realizes that Ottilie, though "ruined" on the outside, nevertheless has a real and living identity--she is not "stripped of everything but her mere existence" (427) as her family believes. Moreover, this identity is composed not only of what she is now but of what she once was, a reality which is not "past and done for" (427) but which survives within her. She is "neither young nor old" (420), but both: the adult, disfigured Ottilie and the "pretty smiling German baby" (426). Ottilie admits within herself a plural identity, enabling Miranda to "spin out" her once-inviolable, changeless and intact core to include an element which is distinctly Other, a woman who is a contradictory mix of emotion and identity. The act does not dissolve "the hard core . . . that is in the heart of each separate man" into a group identity, as is true of the Mullers' "communal grief" (432); instead, it creates connection while retaining subjective selves. Jones refers to this process as a "productivity of the body: a living filament spins itself out between the two women. Thus subject-object constructions become, in this rearticulation of language's demands, subject-subject" (12). Put another way, the act

creates multiple centers of identity for Miranda: the "core" of her prior identity, Ottilie's "core" which becomes "a part of" Miranda, the shared human "cores" coexist, if separately, within Miranda, forming a webbed cluster of identity.

The bit of cardboard connected her at once somehow to the world of human beings I knew; for an instant some filament lighter than cobweb spun itself out between that living center in her and in me, a filament from some center that held us all bound to our inescapable common source, so that her life and mine were kin, even a part of each other, and the painfulness and strangeness of her vanished. She knew well that she had been Ottilie, with those steady legs and watching eyes, and she was Ottilie still within herself. (426)

This episode marks a distinct change in Miranda's identity. No longer does she struggle for absolute order and integration--through her acceptance of Ottilie as a part of her, she has admitted contradiction and disorder and difference and change within herself. Miranda's changing representations of Ottilie, enumerated by Jones--"from servant girl to oldest Muller daughter to unknowable subject, from mute object to signifier (when Ottilie points to the photograph) to mute subject" (12)--necessitates her changed representation of herself through her shifting relation to Ottilie. Immutability and exclusivity are no longer characteristics of her sense of self, and relationality becomes an undeniable, undenied, and necessary element of her identity.

. . . she was no stranger to me, and could not be again. . . . I could not forget her. She drifted into my mind like a bit of weed carried in a

current and caught there, floating but fixed,
 refusing to be carried away. . . . I could do
 nothing but promise myself that I would forget her
 . . . and to remember her for the rest of my life.
 (426, 427)

Also at issue in this episode and throughout the text is Miranda's sense of voice. This aspect of Miranda's identity, of course, receives added emphasis through the fact of Otilie's muteness. Throughout "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," Miranda is very concerned with retaining the power of her voice, using it, as she slips toward death, as her primary means of asserting her continued existence, if only through shouting. When she "wakes" to post-war reality, her voice is ravaged by the effort: it is thin, weak, and stripped of its ability to maintain connection with others.

It is not surprising, then, that when Miranda first comes to the Mullers' she distrusts language, preferring instead the solitude that the Mullers' German speech enables her, as an outsider, to enjoy. As Jones points out, however, this unintelligible language, as well as the wordless sounds of nature, gradually effect her recovery and lead her back into the symbolic order through "an empowering experience of the pre-oedipal" (14).

In this scene with Otilie, Miranda is confronted with a woman who has access to no other language but this semiotic. Miranda has discovered for herself that this semiotic is not without its advantages, yet she has also seen through Otilie the costs of being unrepresented in her

society (Jones 14). Jones concludes that for Miranda Otilie is finally undefinable, unable to be named or represented (16, 17).

While this is largely true, still Miranda is able to decipher a certain amount of what Otilie communicates to her through her semiotic: Miranda comprehends at least part of what Otilie conveys about her identity in this scene; in her next encounter with Otilie, described more fully in the following paragraph, she not only instinctively uses the same "language" to sympathize with Otilie by echoing her "howl," but reconstructs her preconceptions about Otilie's needs to come to the truth about them. And, of course, Miranda does represent Otilie to some extent by writing this first-person account which affirms Otilie's reality and humanity. The degree of success she attains is unquestionably in proportion to the extent to which Miranda uses her first hand knowledge of the semiotic to disrupt the symbolic, to offer alternatives to its representation. Thus Miranda is ultimately enriched, her own multiplicity expanded, by exposure to and use of this "other" language.

Not until her final encounter with Otilie, however, does the process of Miranda's change culminate. After the Mullers have left for their mother's burial, Miranda, alone in her room, hears a strange, doglike howl; running downstairs, she discovers that the noise she hears is Otilie, mourning, Miranda assumes, her mother's death and

her own exclusion from the funeral procession. Having decided to take Otilie to the burial, Miranda goes to the barn to hitch up the same spring wagon that carried her to the Mullers'. Though the harness is "still a mystery" (434), still a jumble of mended fractures and incomprehensible connections, Miranda herself can now manage it and make it function. This suggests that Miranda no longer insists on complete unity and indicates her new willingness to allow contradictions and incompatibilities within herself. This implication is reinforced by Miranda's description of the turning of the off-center wheels as "a truly broad comedy swagger" (434), a repetition of her early description, but now without the despairing addition of "a small boat on a choppy sea" (410) with which she had initially associated the motion.

Struggling to re-position Otilie where she has slipped on the seat, Miranda for the first time feels Otilie's bare skin against her own. So clearly does this touch convey to Miranda Otilie's "realness, her humanity, this shattered being that was a woman" (434) that she unconsciously echoes Otilie's doglike cry, though her own remains an internal cry. Most importantly, however, this connection allows her to recognize Otilie's true needs, which had been buried by Miranda's assumptions of her needs. Miranda suddenly realizes that Otilie's grief stems not only from her desire to be a part of the family sorrow, but from her desire to be

apart from it and from the sorrow which she lives with daily. In this moment, Miranda recognizes the extent of Ottilie's multiplicity and begins to allow the full range of her own: she can be a part of Ottilie, yet separate; she can both "bridge" and "deny" the space between them (434); joy and sorrow can coexist, and change can occur. Inspired by this realization, Miranda swerves from following the procession which has "straightened out into formal order" (433) and takes an alternate path with Ottilie, the path which leads, significantly, to the trees which were, and will be again, "abloom with fireflies" (419).

Notes

¹ Porter's description of Miranda's development as a woman seems to generally follow the pattern of a conventional female bildungsroman that Abel, Hirsch, and Langland describe in The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development. Though Miranda's maturation is shown from childhood (which is not characteristic of the female bildungsroman) in all other respects the story of her growth follows the traditional pattern. Specifically, she moves towards an awakening only after she chooses and then rejects conventional female options (in her case, marriage); she is not aided in her development by formal education or sexual experience. Miranda's growth of knowledge is also largely an inward struggle, not an outward rebellion (7-8).

² Sophia Jane is also strengthened by her connection with the female land, as the "homecoming" quotation given here suggests. Jane Flanders, for example, points out that Sophia Jane "instinctively" returns to the female land as a means to support her family rather than duplicate the capitalist pursuits of her husband (55). Judith Fetterley considers Sophia Jane's return to the land as reinforcing her need for order and a specifically female growth and dependability when she writes that Sophia Jane's connection to the land reveals that her "roots are in an order older than the old order and more enduring" (11).

³ Jane Krause DeMouy comments upon Amy's story and its effect upon her niece Miranda: "If 'The Old Order' is a catalogue of the 'giants' of Miranda's childhood who taught

her what a woman might be, 'Old Mortality' is the story of Miranda's confrontation with the most formidable archetype her society can offer: the Southern belle, a nineteenth century American manifestation of the virgin love goddess" ("Face to Face" 129).

* Interestingly, the real-life model for the character of Amy was Porter's Aunt Annie (Givner, Life 55).

° Interestingly, Porter considered this image to be crucial to the intention and direction of her story. Livid because a typesetter omitted her reference to fireflies in the final typeset of her story, Porter wrote to a friend, "Further, the Idiot . . . mangled a whole important passage about the fireflies in the orchard. . . . the reference to the fireflies, the sole, single reason for describing the scene at all, was left out! (Letters 580-81)

CHAPTER 4
EUDORA WELTY'S SHORT STORIES

All of Katherine Anne Porter's female protagonists, though with varying degrees of success, strive to preserve a core sense of self. The solitary exception to this pattern is Miranda, who in "Holiday" allows herself the more expansive possibilities of a multiplicity of identity. This same multiplicity, which in "Holiday" is tentative and only preliminarily explored, is in Welty's works celebrated and given full expression.

Not only does Welty allow most of her female protagonists a full range of experience and opportunity for growth, but she also gives them multiple ways to express this growth and range. A quick look at these avenues of expression may be helpful in introducing this chapter, which discusses Welty's independent works of short fiction. By independent works I refer to those not connected by a shared setting or by characters who are progressively developed in more than one text. One such expression of multiplicity is through a fluidity of identity, the ability of a female protagonist to move from one conception of her self to another, a willingness to "try on" different ways of looking at herself. An openness to the otherness in people, in experiences, and in circumstances is another way Welty's

women have of adding to their identities. By accepting and exploring what is different from themselves, these women can add variety and an extended sense of perspective to their own identities, creating an otherness within.

Closely related to this openness is an ability to allow the coexistence of opposites within individual identity; instead of attempting to reconcile differences, the differences themselves are celebrated and the tensions between them left undiffused. Fullness of voice is frequently a sign and an enabler of a spaciousness and multiplicity of identity in Welty's fictional women. By enunciating one's capacity as a subject, enabling relationality, and celebrating the power of language, voice enlarges the identities of the women who exercise it. Finally, multiplicity of identity is sometimes expressed in Welty's fiction through multiple identities--coexistent selves which are not fragmented parts of a single self but, as Cixous might put it, are "parts that are wholes."

A refusal of this interplay of plurality results in women silenced, objectified, and trapped in restrictive and even hurtful relationships. This is, for example, the position of three of the women in Welty's early fiction. The women in "The Whistle" and "The Key," both from her first short story collection published in 1941, and Jenny in "At the Landing" from her second collection, The Wide Net and Other Stories, published in 1943, are the only ones of

Welty's female protagonists who, when given the opportunity to expand and vary their identities through embracing new and multiple possibilities, are somehow unable to accept or manage these offerings. Welty seems to suggest that their personal dissatisfaction and unfulfilled identities are the direct results of their inability to accept such multiplicity.

Sara Morton in "The Whistle," whose given name ironically means "princess," lives a life tragically at odds with the regal implications of her name. The fact that her body is described at one point as "weightless as a strip of cane, there was hardly a shape to the quilt under which she was lying" (58) suggests the vegetative and formless state of her identity. The more delineated parallel of Sara with the tomatoes she and her husband grow underscores her vegetative state and describes the fruitlessness of her efforts toward identity growth and development. The immature plants, though orderly "in their neat rows," nevertheless have an "exposed fragility" (57) which recalls Sara's own slight frame and the vulnerability of her identity to the same sort of perpetual destruction the tomatoes face yearly. Sara makes the parallel explicit in a stream of thought which does not distinguish between her own and the tomatoes' fate:

She was so tired of the cold! . . . Year after year, she felt sure that she would die before the cold was over. Now, according to the Almanac, it was spring. . . . But year after year it was always the same. The plants would be set out in

their frames, transplanted always too soon, and there was a freeze. . . . When was the last time they had grown tall and full, that the cold had held off and there was a crop? (58)

This is the numb, frost-blanchd reality which Sara crouches under the blanket of her pallet to avoid, the reality her waking dreams replace with visions of sun-ripened tomatoes and the festive atmosphere of Dexter during tomato packing season. Significantly, this dream contains the multiplicity which is so lacking in Sara's cold, colorless world of reality. Her dream of "dusty little Dexter" is transformed by the decoration of spring into a festival of plurality: the green and red of the tomatoes, the yellow of the telegram papers waved by Mr. Perkins mingle with the sounds of the music box, guitar strumming, drunken shouting, pistol shots, the laughter of children and girls. Hordes of people, wildly incompatible yet composing an intriguing montage, populate her dream: tatooed, tanned Florida packers, young lovers, unruly children, a crippled man, bashful girls who wrap tomatoes--all are a part of the relational complex which Sara's mind creates. Stretching endlessly though the center of this collected chaos, dividing and unifying it, is the line of empty train cars, being filled with the sun-ripened tomatoes which are emblematic of the fullness of identity which Sara lacks. In particular, this dream abounds with the many-expressed voices and relationality which receive no expression or outlet in Sara's life. Her marriage to Jason is

characterized by "a great lack of necessity to speak, with poverty which may have bound them like a disaster too great for any discussion but left them still separate and undesirous of sympathy" (58). So absolute is their silence that only two words of dialogue are given in the story (61).

The Dexter of Sara's thoughts seems to designate far more than a location. As Robert Brinkmeyer points out, place is for Welty intimately tied to feeling and exists to provide ever-expanding possibilities for her characters. Place offers "equilibrium," yet when expanded, gives "direction" as well. Brinkmeyer quotes Welty's view: "It [place] is forever astir, alive, changing, reflecting, like the mind of man itself" ("Openness to Otherness" 72). Clearly this is what Dexter signifies to Sara--a realm of otherness that lies within her self, that is open to change and variety, that offers limitless possibilities.

The degree to which the tomatoes represent the state or condition of Sara's own identity is reiterated in Sara's weary yet determined efforts to protect the tomato seedlings from the frost of which the whistle warns. Sara uses the same blankets to cover the plants that she had earlier used to shield her own body from the cold. When Sara sacrifices even her own dress in her effort to save the plants, it is clear that she has stripped away her last tenuous defenses against her own depletion. Neither she nor the tomato plants

which represent the potential for her identity's expansion and ripeness of being have much chance for survival.

It quite literally requires a fire to initiate a thawing of Sara's numbed and depleted identity, opening it up once more to the multiplicitous possibilities of her desire. Earlier, fire is explicitly linked with her dream, "the vision of ripe tomatoes" coming "in brief snatches, like the flare-up of the little fire" (59).

This connection recalls Welty's own association of place with fire.

A place that was ever lived in is like a fire that never goes out. It flares up, it smoulders for a time, it is fanned or smothered by circumstances, but its being is intact, forever fluttering within it, the result of some original ignition. Sometimes it gives out glory, sometimes its little light must be sought out to be seen, small and tender as a candle flame, but as certain. (Eye 286)

The heat of her identity, like the actual fire in her heart(h), consists only of an "exhausted light" (57), too weak to illuminate anything but "the here and now," which is for her only "cold going on before and after . . . only a trembling in the dark" (59). The fire which Jason builds after they return from the frozen field into an equally chilled house has the potential to stir the flames of her desire and re-kindle the vibrancy, sound, and warmth which characterize it. Stoked first with kindling and kerosene, re-fueled with the log which should have been saved for the end of winter, then made to blaze by throwing in a chair and

then their table, the fire draws Jason and Sara together and somehow even expresses the unsaid: "The fire the kitchen table had made seemed wonderful to them--as if what they had never said, and what could not be, had its life, too, after all" (61).

The "extravagant warmth" of the fire kindles a like extravagance in Sara. It creates an "agitation" in Sara, "like her memories of Dexter in the shipping season" (61). Even her appearance is altered: loosed from its confining pins, Sara's hair hangs "like a child's unbound for a party" and her eyes are wide with wonder, staring "greedily" into the flames. While the fire burns, Sara can experience the unbounded freedom, the pleasure and warmth of festive Dexter. Significantly, Welty represents the fire of Sara's identity here as an "extravagant," roaring fire, nearly uncontainable in its strength. Porter, by contrast, represents identity for her women as a "fiercely burning" yet compressed and centered being, ordered and safely within bounds.

Though Sara can experience, through the fire, the intensity and passion her identity is capable of possessing, it is not a power that she can as yet maintain. Limited by the poverty and barrenness of her life and questioning whether the cycles of destruction will continue to deplete her identity, Sara cannot yet fuel such plurality. After the fire is consumed, the cold seems even more intense by

contrast to what was, and the relationality and voice which Sara momentarily if tenuously possessed seem extinguished: "In the return of winter, of the night's cold, something strange, like fright, or dependency, a sensation of complete helplessness, took possession of her" (61). The one word which Sara does speak, her husband's name, is swallowed up by the blare of the whistle, the warning of destruction, which blows "as though it would exact something further from their lives" (61). Dexter remains for now only a memory, an unreal-ized possibility for a plurality of identity.

Yet, as Welty's comparison of place with fire suggests, hope remains for the real-ization of a multiplicity of identity. Even if little more than a "candle flame" survives within Sara, still it can flare into larger being. As Brinkmeyer notes, even those characters who fail to achieve an openness and plurality of identity continue to possess the potential for growth and expansion ("Openness to Otherness" 79). Welty in fact uses the same image of fire--and literal fire as well--in The Golden Apples to show the passion and intensity that can ignite into full being if a spark is allowed to burn within.

Sara's condition is replicated in Ellie Morgan in "The Key." Ellie's search for voice and positive relationality as elements of a plural identity, however, is, for several reasons, perhaps even more doomed than Sara's. First, Ellie, along with her husband, is a deaf mute, which

radically limits her ability to communicate while intensifying her desire for expression. Secondly, she is married to Albert, a man who values the secret, unsaid, and separate, the antitheses of Ellie's needs; Jason in "The Whistle," though himself uncommunicative, at least shares enough of Sara's identity needs that he constructs the fire which temporarily supplies those needs for them both. Finally, Ellie never appropriates, even momentarily, the multiplicity for which she yearns, not only because of the restrictions of her condition but more importantly, because the multiplicity she seeks is represented as being outside of herself, not touching her as a self-created dream or the fire's warmth can for Sara.

The young stranger in "The Key" possesses the range and otherness for which Ellie yearns, yet the fact that she is suspicious of him proves that she does not recognize what he can offer her. What he has to offer is an otherness which is at once separate from and a part of Ellie. By gathering into her self what the stranger extends, Ellie's identity can expand into an "ever-widening vision" (Brinkmeyer, "Openness to Otherness 71). By opening her eyes to what he offers, Ellie can see that she already has this otherness within, awaiting expression--her vision of Niagara Falls.

The story, set in a train station where Albert and Ellie Morgan wait for the train which will take them on a much-belated "honeymoon" trip to Niagara Falls, establishes

immediately the story's preoccupation with issues of voice and relationality, aspects which contribute to the fullness of identity Ellie desires. The silence and isolation of the waiting travelers is contrasted with the communal language of insects, whose sounds are like "some tenuous voice in the night, telling a story" (29); even the Morgans' suitcase, which is missing a clasp, is described as "hang[ing] apart finally like a stupid pair of lips" (29), reiterating both Ellie's eagerness to speak, suggested through the image of open lips, and the stupid/dumb silence with which she is ultimately left.

Appropriately, then, it is sound, not movement or a sight, which disturbs the silence and separation of those waiting. This occurs when the key which the stranger has been tossing from hand to hand falls with "a fierce metallic sound like a challenge" (31) upon the floor. Though the key's dropping is for Albert and Ellie, of course, soundless, it has upon them the same effect and also produces the circumstances which could enable Ellie's expansiveness of identity through association with the stranger.

The young stranger is indeed strange. He is undefinable, an embodiment of unreconciled contradictions and tensions, a man who stands apart from, yet seems intimately connected to, Ellie. These "incompatibilities" express in part the irreducibility of his identity, the

expansive range of his being, which does not strive toward integration or comprehensibility but allows contradiction to remain unreconciled, definition to be indefinite. From the first mention of him, he is described as one who defies definition: the flickering overhead lights, which "pulsate like a living and transient force," make him seem to "tremble in the midst of his size and strength, and to fail to impress his exact outline upon the yellow walls" (30). He is, in fact, a complex of many contradictory responses. He stands separate from the other travelers, yet his gaze, "wide" and encompassing, draws them all to himself; he exudes an "excess of energy," yet exhibits also a restraining "reticence"; his expression is at the same time "wide" and "focus[ed]" with "a very tender and explicit regard"; he has the look of a "criminal," yet one whose eyes are "widened with gentleness" (30).

Importantly, the stranger's contradictions accentuate and give expression to the issues which are most crucial to Ellie's sense of identity--relationality and voice. He can, while remaining separate, also give freely of himself; while being silent, say more than words can convey. Both these are accomplished with no sacrifice of the contradiction and variety which coexist so easily within him, as pointed out in this passage which describes the stranger as possessing

a willingness to be forever distracted, even disturbed, in the very reassurance of his body, some alertness which made his strength fluid and dissipated instead of withheld and greedily beautiful. . . . you felt some apprehension that

he would never express whatever might be the desire of his life in being young and strong, in standing apart in compassion . . . his intensity . . . seemed to have impressed the imagination with a shadow of itself, a blackness together with the light, the negative beside the positive. You felt as though some exact, skillful contact had been made between the surfaces of your hearts to make you aware, in some pattern, of his joy and his despair. You could feel the fullness and the emptiness of this stranger's life. (33--emphases mine)

Enabled by his ability to contain such a gamut of possibilities, the young man can supply variant readings to Ellie's and Albert's responses to the dropped key, an ability no other onlooker possesses: "How ignorant [the onlookers] were of all that the young man was seeing!" (32) By declining to claim as his own the key which Albert has picked up from the floor, the stranger initiates a free interplay of interpretations through allowing Ellie and Albert their differing responses to the key.

Welty, in so sharply contrasting Ellie's and Albert's responses to the key, perhaps intended to delineate some possible differences between male and female identity. For though the key's appearance at first seems to draw them together, initiating their private language and prompting Ellie to touch Albert's hand (32), still the key is not a shared symbol but is given intensely personal significance by both Ellie and Albert: each wants "to have their symbols perfectly understood" (32--emphasis mine).

Albert regards the key as a private symbol, a sign which he values solely because he believes it is revealed

exclusively to him. "Happiness, Albert knew, is something that appears to you suddenly, that is meant for you, a thing which you reach for and pick up and hide at your breast, a shiny thing that reminds you of something alive and leaping" (35--emphasis mine). Hence he slips the key into a breast pocket, concealing it from all others, even his wife, to preserve it for himself. "There was something . . . which would let him keep the key always to himself. He knew that, and he would remember it later, when he was alone" (34--emphases mine). Albert's valuation of the individual and personal excludes the human relationality which is so crucial to Ellie, allowing him an inviolate identity and interpretation. "How terrible it was, how strange, that Albert loved the key more than he loved Ellie! . . . The key was closer--closer" (34).

Central to Ellie's sense of relationality and most erosive to Albert's separateness is Ellie's desperation for voice. What is for Albert a necessary and private space is to Ellie a terrifying emptiness which can only be filled with language and communication. "Had Ellie, with her suspicions of everything, come to know even things like this [his response to the key] in her way? How empty and nervous her red scrubbed hands were, how desperate to speak! Yes, she must regard it as unhappiness lying between them, as more than emptiness. She must worry about it, talk about it" (35).

Significantly, Albert regards voice as introducing a fragmenting multiplicity into the quiet seamlessness of his life; to Albert, happiness and comfort are achieved through delegated gender roles ("woman working in the house, you in the field") and an undisturbed individuality "so that you're as full of yourself as a colt, in need of nothing, and nothing needing you" (35). Speech riles the self-absorbed colt and invades the masculine field, disturbs male control and dredges up new and complicated possibilities, upsets the predictable patterns suggested by the field's furrows.

But when you pick up your hands and start to talk, if you don't watch carefully, this security will run away and leave you. You say something, make an observation, just to answer your wife's worryings, and everything is jolted, disturbed, laid open like the ground behind a plow, with you running along after it. (35)

Driven by her different needs, Ellie views the key's appearance to them, as she sees it, as an opportunity for a shared intimacy which is intensified by the sign language which only they can interpret and use. "They were in counter-plot against the plot of those things that pressed down upon them from outside their knowledge and their ways of making themselves understood. It was obvious that [their private language] gave the wife her greatest pleasure" (34). Against what he regards as this invasive relationality, Albert shields the private import of "his" key. "Ellie's anxious, hovering body could wrap him softly as a cradle, but the secret meaning, that powerful sign, that reassurance

he so hopefully sought, so assuredly deserved--that had never come [to Ellie]" (34-35). Thus, by denying Ellie access to the private meaning he has attached to the key, he denies her access to his identity.

When because of their deafness they fail to hear--and thus miss--the train which is to take them to Niagara Falls, the differences between Ellie's and Albert's identity needs become even more enunciated. Clearly, the trip has all along meant far more to Ellie than to Albert: she alone has saved money for the trip (29), and Albert, preoccupied with the key, "did not even mind missing the train" (34). Though Albert earlier in the story gives the key the significance of forecasting happiness for them at Niagara Falls, suggesting a personal investment in the trip, this association is abandoned in his later musings about the key, when his focus shifts from Niagara Falls to the key itself and its private significance to him.

But to Ellie, Niagara Falls, not the key, is her primary "symbol," for it offers to her the chance for relationality, voice, and most importantly, a multiplicity of identity which can involve these and all other parts of her self in nearly limitless combination. "That came to be where she put her hope, all of it" (36). Significantly, too, since water is throughout Welty's texts associated with the feminine, as will be shown more fully in later discussions, Ellie's use of a surging waterfall to represent

her hopes for her identity implies the vision she has for herself is distinctly feminine. Though neither of them have been to the Falls, Albert has seen it as a child on "magic-lantern slides." His recounting of its appearance and particularly of the "little rail" which one can "hear" Niagara by leaning against, is patiently repeated "hundreds of times in his obedience" (36) only for Ellie's sake. To Albert, the story is only a collection of words, Niagara only a flat image on a wall, but to Ellie it is a reality which she can "stare deep, deep into" (36). "He was never looking so far and so deep as Ellie--into the future, into the changing and mixing of their lives together when they should arrive at last at Niagara Falls. To him it was always something postponed" (37).

Ellie, by contrast, is anxious and willing to open all of herself to Niagara Falls' expansive possibilities. The "little rail" which she must "lean up hard against" in order to hear the Falls becomes a metaphor for this willingness. The power and beauty that the Falls represent, their forceful rush and the confluence of the waters which create them, can speak to and even become part of her self by eliminating the distance between herself and her desires. This multiplicity enables a voice which can be heard and absorbed into herself, a bond of relationality which is thus far lacking in her marriage, and an unloosing of the restrictive conditions of her life. As Albert puts it,

(though he has no desire to experience it), "'You hear it with your whole self. You listen with your arms and your legs and your whole body. You'll never forget what hearing is, after that'" (36).

Seeing Ellie sitting, "undauntedly wondering, unsatisfied, waiting for the future" (36) which will never come, Albert for the first time senses and shares a bit of Ellie's own desires. He reflects that if they had not missed the train, "perhaps they would be standing there together, pressed against the little rail, pressed against each other, with their lives being poured through them, changing" (36). Almost instinctively Albert seems aware that such a vision, at least for him, cannot be sustained without the intervention of the stranger, who seems capable of such connection and fluid change, whose contradictions allow nearly limitless outlets for such exchange. Thus, "he glance[s] up once at the stranger, with almost a pleading look, as if to say, 'Won't you come with us?'" (36)

Nearly as quickly as the thought enters his mind, however, Albert abandons it, replacing it with his own ideal of separation and independence, as crucial to his personal identity as connection is to Ellie's. Albert valorizes "the secret and proper separation that lies between a man and a woman, the thing that makes them what they are in themselves, their secret life, their memory of the past, their childhood, their dreams" while recognizing that this

is "unhappiness" to Ellie (36). Without question, Albert's needs and desires place him not beside Ellie, pressed together at the little rail, but across the chasm from her, as his final thoughts about the key confirm: "Perhaps he had even decided that it was a symbol not of happiness with Ellie, but of something else--something which he could have alone, for only himself, in peace, something strange and unlooked for which would come to him . . ." (37).

As if aware of Albert's position, it is to Ellie that the stranger makes his solitary gesture of the story; though Ellie has responded to him with suspicion and avoidance, the stranger nevertheless seems to recognize her desperation for his broader range of possibilities, his openness to connection. Thus, with almost equal desperation, he gives to Ellie her own key, the key to Room 2 of the Star Hotel. Even as he makes his offer, however, the stranger is aware of its inadequacy--"You could see that he despised and saw the uselessness of the thing he had done" (37). The act is ultimately futile because Ellie seems adamant that the enrichment of her identity must come through her marriage and through the trip which she hopes will give her marriage that capacity. She seems unable or unwilling to imagine that she can add to her self in any other way or through any other relationship. More critically, Ellie cannot imagine a fuller identity for herself alone, an independent expansion of self not dependent on relation to effect that plurality.

Thus, the stranger can only offer a single star (the key from the Star Hotel), not a multitudinous galaxy, and then only a star which is rooted in this world. The room number suggests another irony of his effort: Room 2, because it is not singular, can never satisfy Albert; and because Ellie relies so heavily on Albert to meet her identity needs, it can never truly be for two. Thus inhibited by her own limitations, Ellie, though presented with the possibility of plurality, remains unchanged, alone with herself in a deserted train station.

Jenny Lockhart of "At the Landing" is faced with a quite different situation than either Sara or Ellie. The multiplicity toward which Sara and Ellie reach, though distinctly Other, is accessible to them and positive in its enriching fullness of being. In "At The Landing," Welty explores the possible cost of embracing absolute Otherness, an Otherness which Jenny is not psychologically equipped to handle.

There are, Welty suggests in this work, limitless expressions of multiplicity. To define multiplicity too closely would be, in fact, a contradiction of its indefinability and scope. What is for one the fullest and most enriching expression of identity may not be for another. Welty shows the process of Jenny's attempts to achieve a fullness of identity for herself and seems to imply that the difficulties and ultimate diminishment of

identity which Jenny endures is the result of her attempt to adopt without discrimination an identity which is in some ways incompatible with her identity needs. In other words, an acceptance of multiplicity involves not the gathering of all possibilities into the self, but the inclusion of all possibilities which can enrich and fulfill an individual identity.

Jenny's destruction comes from her inability to recognize in Billy Floyd's identity the aspects which can be damaging to her self. Instead of drawing from his identity only those aspects which could affirm and expand her own identity, Jenny opens herself, though unwittingly, to all of Billy Floyd's nature, an openness which Mag could perhaps handle but which proves too much for Jenny.

Welty was aware of the complexities of her story, the difficulties and risks in being drawn to Otherness. In an interview with Jean Todd Freeman, she admits her own struggle to express the conflicting, yet coexistent, aspects of the town upon which "At The Landing" is based.

That ["At The Landing"] has lots of faults to it; that's obscure. I was really trying to express something that I felt in that place. It used to be really lost down there. A ghost river-town. It was magical to me and I was trying to express some of that lostness and the feeling of enchantment. Maybe I got too carried away by my own words.¹

Judging from the frustration and uncertainty Welty expresses in this segment of the interview, perhaps she herself came close to being overwhelmed more by lostness

than by enchantment. Certainly Jenny is ultimately lost, led to her destruction by the enchantment she feels for Billy Floyd.

Though Jenny's desire for an expanded sense of self surfaces most strongly in reference to Billy Floyd, the transient fisherman who roams about The Landing, her desire exists prior to and apart from her exposure to him. Even while isolated and restricted by her grandfather, she visualizes and delights in far more expansive possibilities for herself. These two options--the restriction which is a reality, the plurality which is as yet only a desire--quite literally exist side by side in the two paintings on the wall of the parlor. Painted by her mother, who herself knew the impossible coexistence of the two options, the paintings depict "The Massacre at Fort Rosalie" and "The Bird Fair" (241). The former, which portrays destruction and entrapment in a fort with a distinctly feminine name, suggests the condition both mother and daughter have been and are subjected to as women under the regulation of the grandfather, who takes his role as guardian literally. For Jenny's mother, restriction reached Gothic extremes: for her desire to go to Natchez, with its gaiety and motion, she was relegated to a small room with barred door (240) and "kept guard on there" (253). Jenny has scarcely more freedom; though she can move from room to room, "at the door her grandfather would call her back" (242). The large

closet "in which she had sometimes longed to hide," the "great box-like canopied bed" upon which she sleeps, and the pavilion with its "circling thorny rose" (242) all reiterate her enclosure. Between mother and daughter there exists a bond of shared entrapment which acts as a barrier between Jenny and her grandfather, for "the gaze that went so fondly between them held and stretched tight the memory of Jenny's mother" (242). As Jenny's mother, in memory, is suspended motionless, so Jenny is also in a stasis of objectification; "she never performed any act, even a small act, for herself" (243).

Yet even within this restriction there exists the potential for a freer multiplicity, as is suggested in the second painting, "The Bird Fair." The word fair of the title evokes both beauty and festivity, and that Jenny is a potential participant in both is made clear through bird metaphors applied to her. Her heartbeat, for example, is described as "sharp as birdsong in the night" (241), and at a later point in the story, she and Billy Floyd are compared to "two mockingbirds that were about to strike their beaks and dance" (244).

Several other rooms offer other variations of the multiplicity of identity available to her. In the dining room, she can sit, in succession, on eight different needlepoint seat covers, a sort of private testing of different positions and roles she could potentially hold.

In the library she tries her imaginative possibilities, creating dances and composing songs on a floor free of obstructions and surrounded by "books without titles" (241), suggesting freedom from restriction, definition, and naming. Mirrors line the hallways, "endlessly" reflecting the various landscapes painted on vases. The infinity suggested by these endless reflections is a positive possibility for Jenny's identity as well.

And in every room are the prisms, in shadow and light, moving freely in the air currents. Providing both "the faintest of musical notes when air stirred in any room" and a full spectrum of color, creating "rainbows" from singular beams of white light, the prisms are a wonderful representation of the possibilities Jenny's identity is capable of encompassing. Rather than actively pursuing her own transformation, however, Jenny instead passively waits for change to somehow magically come to her: "It was her way not to touch them [the prisms] herself, but to let the touch be magical, a stir of the curtain by the outer air, that would also make them rainbows" (241--emphasis mine). Part of the logic of her passivity is Jenny's belief that deliberate action is a rude touch which can destroy the delicate beauty and magic of the individual. The same logic will not allow her to touch Billy Floyd, either literally or through the invasive scrutiny of knowing him too completely.

If she could have followed and found him then, she would have started on foot. But she knew what she would find when she would come to him. She would

find him equally real with herself--and could not touch him then. As she was living and inviolate, so of course was he, and when that gave him delight, how could she bring a question to him? . . . She . . . knew about love, how it would have a different story in the world if it could lose the moral knowledge of a mystery that is in the other heart. Nothing in Floyd frightened her that drew her near, but at once she had the knowledge come to her that a fragile mystery was in everyone and in herself, since there it was in Floyd, and that whatever she did, she would be bound to ride over and hurt, and the secrecy of life was the terror of it. (245--emphases mine)

To know Billy Floyd completely would be, to Jenny, to diminish his identity, to make him smaller and more restricted. Likewise, to expose all of her self to Billy Floyd, to reserve nothing from his gaze or knowledge, would be equally depleting to her, making her vulnerable and open to risk. Mary Hughes Brookhart and Suzanne Marrs refer to this tendency as "the poetic and selective quality of [Jenny's] vision" (515); though she does not reduce Billy Floyd's identity in any of the aspects which "[draw] her near"--his freedom and irrepressible spirit, for example (516)--she does refuse to fully face the dark possibilities and risks of association with him.

Possibly even more terrifying is Jenny's lack of self-knowledge. If Jenny is successful, at least at first, in keeping a part of her identity inviolate and mysterious to others, she is unfortunately equally as successful in being an inigma to herself.

Maybe some day she could become bright and shining all at once, as though at the very touch of another with herself. But now she was like a house with all its rooms dark from the beginning,

and someone would have to go slowly from room to room, slowly and darkly, leaving each one lighted behind, before going to the next. . . . She herself did not know what might lie ahead, she had never seen herself. She looked outward with the sense of rightful space and time within her, which must be traversed before she could be known at all. And what she would reveal in the end was not herself, but the way of the traveler. (254)

This passage illustrates how unenlightened Jenny is about her own identity. Still evident in this passage, which appears late in the story, is her continued passivity, her dependence on magical transformation ("she could become bright and shining all at once") or upon another's agency ("someone would have to go slowly from room to room") to effect her own change. Ultimately, there is no self-illumination possible, for the "rooms" of her identity are "lighted behind," while the rooms that "lie ahead" remain dark and unknown. The fullness of identity and self-knowledge she seeks, pictured in the many lighted rooms viewed together, will continue to elude her. Though her search for self may be unrelenting, the passage suggests that she will never know herself: "[a]nd what she would reveal in the end was not herself, but the way of the traveler."

Jenny looks to Billy Floyd to provide the fullness of identity and self-knowledge she seeks for herself. Throughout the story, Floyd is given multiple associations: sun, fire, water, wind, open pasture, stars, and a horse are all used to describe his subjectivity, freedom, and

expansiveness. Mary Hughes Brookhart and Suzanne Marrs point out that Billy Floyd, in fact, epitomizes the fullness of the non-material world (shown through his association with the myth of Atlantis and his association with a never-dying fire), the fullness of the past (as expressed in his connection with the Natchez Indians), and the fullness of the present in his connection with the river (514-15).

Yet in all four of the encounters Jenny has with Floyd prior to the flood, her deliberate distance and difference from him are stressed. The setting for the first three meetings is the same: "the pasture, the sun and the grazing horse were on his side, the graves [of the family cemetery] on hers, and they each looked across at the other's" (244). Yet while he can, and willingly does, bridge the gap between them by "reach[ing] the ravine and leap[ing] down into it with widespread arms as though he jumped into something dangerous," Jenny can only sit "stiff and stern . . . with her feet planted just so on the step below" of a stile. The stile should offer the possibility of transition, but in fact it solidifies Jenny's refusal to move herself a step beyond her self-imposed boundaries. When Floyd moves towards her, Jenny orders him to "'Go back.'" Though delighting in his otherness, she will not embrace it for herself. "But for her, his eyes were as bright and unconsumed as stars up in the sky. Then she wanted to catch him and see him close, but not to touch him" (244). Jenny's

response to Floyd is paralleled in the motion of the black butterflies which trace Jenny and Floyd's walk "together" on opposite banks of the ravine. "At each step they took, two black butterflies over the flowers were whirring just alike, suspended in the air, one circling the other rhythmically, or both moving from side to side in a gentle wave-like way, one above the other" (244--emphases mine). She can thus circle Billy Floyd, or remain in his shadow, but not fly free of him, on the strength of her own wings. Jenny wants to pattern her own identity after his own fluidity, yet she cannot truly participate in his freedom and expansiveness because of her own passive position.

St. George Tucker Arnold, Jr. suggests that Jenny's reticence to touch and be touched reveals Welty's belief that "[t]he secret mysteries of separate individuals remain untouched and untouchable, beyond physical contact" ("Woman's Psyche" 334). When physical contact is made, he argues, the result is "psychic violation--rape." With this argument, he implies that Welty views touch as a negative connection and perhaps suggests that separation is a more viable option for Welty's women. However, the persistence with which Welty shows her characters reaching toward connection belies the truth of Arnold's argument.

Moreover, though Jenny maintains her separateness from Floyd throughout at least the first part of the text, there are rare and isolated moments in which she tentatively

pursues connection. She attempts this connection through touch (244), through scrutiny of his face and body (249), or through verbalizing his name (245). These demonstrate Jenny's growing willingness to take an active role in enlarging her self by drawing from Billy Floyd's potentially enriching possibilities. Despite Floyd's resistance to her efforts, Welty seems clearly to suggest that neither Floyd nor, more importantly, the subjectivity and multiplicity which he embodies, is beyond Jenny's reach. One detail which suggests this fact is his connection with the horse. With his tangled mane of pale hair and his animal-like movements, Floyd is the human manifestation of the red horse he rides so wildly.

He went alert in the field like a listening animal. The horse came near and when he touched it, stood with lifted ears beside him, then broke away. . . . Floyd lifted his foot and stamped on the ground, and held out his careless arms to catch the horse he had excited. (244-45)

Yet though it seems that Jenny is far from sharing the horse's and Floyd's wild abandon, the horse is, significantly, "the Lockhart horse." Jenny's thrilled comment--"Never had she known that the Lockhart horse could run like that" (245)--is at least an oblique acknowledgement of her own untested potential.

But the scene which best demonstrates the possibility of Jenny's assimilating Floyd's otherness is the encounter she observes between Mag and Billy Floyd. Mag, though also a Lockhart, is far more closely aligned with Billy Floyd

than with Jenny. Like Floyd's, Mag's pale hair tosses freely in the wind; like Floyd, who is associated at different points with flame (243, 251), Mag also "crackled like a green wood fire" (246); like Floyd's own, Mag's voice is loud and assertive, a parallel to Floyd's voice which "frighten[s] and amaze[s]" (245). Their romping play allows them an imaginative interplay which is mutually satisfying. "Floyd would turn on his heel and whirl old Mag off the ground. Mag ran and she snapped at him . . . and he laughed and caught her" (246).

Importantly, Jenny is moved by their play; when it is over, she rubs her own arms as Mag had rubbed hers, a physical act which confirms the veracity of inner identification: "she had felt whatever Mag had felt. . . . She had felt what was in another heart besides her own" (246). This awakening relationship between Mag and Jenny seems a perfect example of the "dialogic" exchange (the term taken from Mikhail Bakhtin) which Brinkmeyer and Patricia Yaeger say characterizes the relationships and perspectives in Welty's texts. Welty, according to Brinkmeyer, "explores the dynamics of growth . . . that occur in the charged relationship between a person and something other than the person--the other" ("Openness to Otherness" 70). Similarly, Yaeger speaks of the "dialogic imagination" in Welty's works, an interaction of perspectives, styles, and voices which form, to use Bakhtin's vocabulary, a "heteroglossia"

("Dialogic Imagination" 563). The connection Jenny feels with Mag is one of Welty's first portrayals of a relationship between two women, a relationship which fosters individual growth of identity.²

Jenny's relationship with Mag allows an imperfect participation in otherness, to be sure: her participation is passive and vicarious, she cannot define "whatever" Mag feels, and her openness takes in only Mag and not yet Floyd (246). Yet it is a beginning, and initiates her journey into the "strange other country" which she later tries to explore with Billy Floyd. Here, appropriately, the country is presented as being at the bottom of Mag's well, whose depths only Billy Floyd can reach: it is Billy Floyd who draws water for Mag as part of their play--"he went and clattered and banged the buckets for her at the well" (246).³ Jenny for the first time imagines herself as no longer straddling the stile but as entering the unknown, the Other, of herself and of Mag and Billy Floyd. Though her journey is only imaginative, nevertheless it is the first indication of Jenny's transition from a distanced delight in otherness to a participation in it herself.

She wanted to get there, to arrive graceful and airy in some strange other country and walk along its level land beneath its secret sky. She thought she could see herself, fleet as a mirror-image, rising up in a breath of astonished farewell and walking to the well of old Mag. It was built so that it has steps like a stile. She saw herself walk up them, stand on top, look about, and then go into the dark passage. (246)

Oddly, St. George Tucker Arnold, Jr., in his Jungian reading of this story, interprets the well imagery as a sign of Jenny's near-regression, her urge to return to her grandfather ("Woman's Psyche" 334). Ignoring the positive language used to describe the country of the well and disregarding the fact that this is a new, unknown territory Jenny wishes to explore rather than the familiar entrapment of her familial home, Arnold misses the "import" of this "passage."

As she stands, in imagination, atop the stile, Jenny's posture mirrors Floyd's expansive stance of a later scene. In this later scene, Floyd overlooks the point where the smaller river wells up from a buried spring and joins the greater force of "the Mississippi beyond" (249).

He stood above her with his feet planted down and looked out over the landscape from within that moment. Level with him now, all The Landing spread under his eyes. Not knowing the world around, she could not know how The Landing looked set down in it. (249-50)

This scene is further connected with the imagery of the former by its description of the mussel sending up bubbles through the sand from its watery country below. Recalling one of the opening images of the story, Jenny's mother's mandolin "rising like a bubble, and filling with water" (240), the mussel represents to Jenny not only the possibility of withheld regions of her identity being freed to the surface with a beauty of motion but also the fluid possibility of love newly awakened in her.

A hidden mussel was blowing bubbles like a spring through the sand where [Floyd's] boat was teasing the water. It was the little pulse of bubbles and not himself or herself that was the moment for her then[.] . . . A clear love is in the world--this came to her as insistently as the mussel's bubbles through the water. . . . It is in the bubble in the water in the river, and it has its own changing and its mysteries of days and nights, and it does not care how we come and go. (250--emphasis in original)

Jenny views this love as pure, intimate, and independent of mood or circumstance; through it, she believes, she can experience the multiplicity of identity that so delights her in Billy Floyd.

. . . it was when love was of the one for the one, that it seemed to hold all that was multitudinous and nothing was single any more. She had one love and that was all, but she dreamed that she lined up on both sides of the road to see her love come by in a procession. She herself was more people than there were people in The Landing, and her love was enough to pass through the whole night, never lifting the same face. (255-56)

What Jenny perhaps fails to recognize is that achieving this plurality is not a simple, natural occurrence but a task requiring great strength. Ultimately, Jenny lacks the mussel/muscle that would enable her transformation.

This is not to say, however, that there has been no change in Jenny. She has moved from almost exaggerated withholding and willful separation to a point of imaginative participation, through the love she feels for Billy Floyd, in a fullness of identity.

The circumstances of the flood which comes to The Landing provide Jenny with the opportunity to engage the

expansive identity she has only imagined up to this point. Even Jenny's grandfather, in his dream which opens the text, is aware of the freeing and expansive possibilities of the flood and fears those possibilities. He compares its power both to a horse ("'Like a horse. A mane of cedar trees tossing over the top'") and to a force which enables flight, recalling the bird imagery associated with Jenny. "'Like poor people who have learned to fly at last . . . all the people in The Landing, all kinds and conditions of people, are gliding off and upward to darkness'" (240). Weighted down by his heavy brocade robe, the cord and tassel of which "weigh upon his fragile walking like a chain," and compared to a chicken ("his little chin that was like a chicken's clean breastbone tilting upwards" [240]), a flightless bird, Jenny's grandfather is himself incapable of soaring. Yet he fears the flood's effect upon his granddaughter. Thus he speaks of the flood as a dangerous, uncontrolled insurgence, capable of drowning. "'It has borne down, and it has closed us in'" (240).

Predictably, the flood is also explicitly associated with Billy Floyd. In the grandfather's dream, it is Floyd who predicts and brings on the deluge. Jenny also connects Floyd (whose very name approximates flood) to the event, though to her it signifies a wonderful vastness, infinite possibility: "Jenny looked in Floyd's shining eyes and saw how they held the whole flood, as the flood held its triumph

in its whirlpools, and it was a vast and unsuspected thing" (250).

Jenny's yearning to participate in this expansiveness is revealed through her efforts to speak. Significantly, she views communication both as an exchange of otherness and as an exposure of her withheld self; hence voice here becomes the means by which she can potentially achieve the multiplicity of identity which has so delighted her in Billy Floyd and Mag.

She would like to tell him some strange beautiful thing, if she could speak at all, something to make him speak. Communication would be telling something that is all new so as to have more of the new told back. The dream of that held her spellbound, with the things possible that hung in the air like clouds over the world, and she smiled in pure belief, for they were beautiful. (251--emphasis mine)

This is a remarkable shift from the restriction of her grandfather, who prohibited her from speaking to any of the townsmen (247), Billy Floyd most especially (249). It is also a stark contrast to the "deafness" (and hence muteness) which she previously experienced around Billy Floyd. By contrast, his dialogic responsiveness to all that surrounds him and his bold and amazing shouts to Mag are considered evidence to Jenny of Billy Floyd's fullness and plurality.

. . . there was not a sound that she could hear. It could only be that Floyd missed nothing in the world, and could hear innumerable outward things. She said his name, for she was so close by. It was the first time.

He stayed motionless, and she knew that he lived apart in delight. That would make a strange glow fall over the field where he was, and the world go black for her, left behind. (245)

Though her efforts at this later point fall far short of Mag's and Floyd's uninhibited speech, and though she silences her voice at Floyd's unreceptiveness, still she does enunciate an "'I'" (251), a major step in her self-affirmation.

Yet the flood offers not only the release from boundaries and a fullness of being, as Jenny first imagines, but also the potential for destruction. Powerful and invasive of the homes and lives in The Landing, the flood brings defilement as well. As the flood deepens, covering over The Landing, Floyd takes Jenny in his boat to a high and isolated place and "violate[s] her" (251). The word is carefully chosen. Judging from Jenny's response to him, which includes thoughts of love and a desire to remain with him, she does not regard his act as rape. She believes that the act joins her not only physically but psychically with Billy Floyd and includes her in the fullness of identity which she so admires in Billy Floyd. Yet the word remains. Welty's use of it clearly implies that violence has been done to Jenny.

To Billy Floyd, sex is as natural an act for him as eating--both are "a taking freely of what was free" (251). There is even an implication that sex allows him the same multiplicity, freedom, and imaginative play that he enjoys with Mag, for when sex is completed, "still he was without care or demand and as gay as if he were still clanging the

bucket at the well" (251). While Welty is not judgemental of Floyd's careless sexuality, but presents it merely as an irrepressible natural force with no deliberate malicious intent, still the sympathy of the story is directed toward Jenny. There is very real pathos in Jenny's efforts to grow through this experience, to make Billy Floyd's world--though foreign and shocking--a part of herself.

This she attempts through eating the wild meat he has prepared.

. . . what people ate in the world was earth,
river, wildness and liveness, fire and ashes.
People took the fresh death and the hot fire into
their mouths and got their own life. She ate
greedily as long as he ate, and took what he took.
She ate eagerly, looking up at him while her teeth
bit, to show him herself, her proud hunger . . .
(252)

When Jenny later vomits what she has eaten, it is clear that she cannot assimilate Floyd's world into her self, that "the dream of love . . . had never carried her yet to the first country of which it told" (252). This "first country," the region of dreams, of love, of the beautiful freedom and spirit she saw in Billy Floyd, has been covered over by this second, frightening world of violence and depletion.

As the imagined voice of her grandfather called her back from her journey into the "strange other country" of Mag's well (246--my emphasis), so now she retreats into the womb-like safety of her ancestral home. "[The house] seemed to draw its galleries to itself, to return to its cave of

night and trees, crouched like a child going backwards to the womb" (253). The "ecstasy of cleaning" (253) with which she occupies herself upon her return home underscores her attempt to salvage from the sewage the beautiful fullness of identity represented in an open pasture, a racing horse, the gleam of sunlight. "She ran as if driven, carrying buckets and mops. She scrubbed and pried and shook the river away" (253). The most significant aspect of her cleaning is her "wip[ing] the dark river from all the prisms," for through this act of purification she hopes to recapture the fragile, mysterious beauty, the spectrum of possibilities, that she hoped Billy Floyd could lead her to. Yet this cleansing of the prisms does not make them once more capable of refracting light into a dazzling array of color: there is no further mention of their beauty, and Jenny imagines the rooms now as dark, and when lighted, lighted behind, so that there is no chance to see the interplay of prisms and light (254). Appropriation of Billy Floyd's wild world of elemental forces into her fragile, tender identity is a literally sickening prospect to Jenny, as shown through her vomiting the wild meat he eats with such gusto; yet neither can she retrieve the beautiful country of blue skies and swaying grass she once delighted in. All is changed, and Jenny is "a stranger lost" (248) between two worlds.

Jenny's displacement is accentuated by Mag's response to flood, her acceptance of the Otherness which is a natural

part of her life, as it is for the shopowner who considers no other option but to coexist with the floods. Only a "stranger lost" (248--emphasis mine) could, in his opinion, attempt an extrication. "`Why don't we move away? Because we live here . . .'" (249). Mag, because her identity is more adapted to the lower river life, her nature more attuned to the elemental forces which flow through The Landing, can deal with the darker aspects of the range Billy Floyd moves within. Mary Anne Ferguson shares this impression (233). Welty does not suggest that Mag's (or Billy Floyd's) fullness of identity is superior to what Jenny desires for herself, only that it is a different expression.

Mag's home, surely more subject to flood than Jenny's, which is on one of the highest points of The Landing, still bears the marks of previous floods, yet the sag of the roof gives an image of comfort and rest, the signs used to replace loosened shingles create a patchwork of color, the high water mark seems to give strength to the house, and the windows can still be beautiful though covered with silt:

Its roof, held up at the corners by the two chimneys, sagged like a hammock, and was mended with bark and small colored signs. The black high-water mark made a belt around the house and that alone seemed to tighten it and hold it together. . . . And it was a beautiful doorway to see, with its fanlight and its sidelights, though they were blind with silt. (245, 246--emphases mine)

Jenny, by contrast, cannot live with the shocking and violent aspects of the Otherness she experiences through Billy Floyd; yet the effects of her experience are irrevocable. Even when the outward reminders of that otherness are removed, the internal effects remain. For, when her house is clean once more, Jenny feels panicked and exposed. "And when the house was clean again she felt there was no place to hide in it, not one room. . . . If in all The Landing she could have found a place to feel alone and out of sight, she would have gone there" (253). Jenny's description of her mother's amber beads reveals that she still has a desperate need for a secret center of self to survive.

She looked at the lump of amber, and looked through to its core. Nobody could ever know about the difference between the radiance that was the surface and the radiance that was inside. There were the two worlds. There was no way at all to put a finger on the center of light. And if there were a mountain, the cloud over it could not touch its heart when it traveled over . . . (255--
emphases mine)

The core which can be seen and the "radiance" which permeates the whole of the bead, surface and core, subtly suggests that an "inviolable" center has been affected, that "nobody could ever know about the difference" that has taken place in her. The core is never specifically defined as it is in some of Porter's female characters; its importance lies more in its "necessary" inviolateness rather than in its definition.

Driven by her need for the otherness with Floyd that has so changed her, Jenny leaves home permanently. Jenny's departure is irreversible: she "can no more turn back from Floyd than she could walk out of the depths of the sea" (Brookhart and Marrs 517). This final effort to achieve a multiplicity of identity is doomed, however, because Jenny seeks only what is beautiful to her in Floyd's plurality and ignores or avoids the potentially ugly or violent aspects of his identity. Even now, as she looks back at her home, she sees it as beautifully transformed, an underwater kingdom like the lost Atlantis Floyd is rumored to have come from (255), all memories of the silt-filled rooms erased.

As if it were made of shells and pearls and treasures from the sea, the house glinted in the sunset, tinted with the drops of light that seemed to fall slowly through the vaguely stirring leaves. Tenderly as seaweed the long moss swayed. The chimney branched like coral in the upper blue. (257)

Thus while she perhaps does not now close off a part of her self from his otherness, she does close off part of his otherness from her self. Mag, by contrast, can allow a free exchange of her identity with Floyd's because his identity does not run counter to hers. They "clang their buckets" at the same well, while Jenny is left atop the stile which leads to this "other country." Neither does Mag depend upon Billy Floyd to form her identity. This is not the case with Jenny. So different are their identities, their worlds, that she needs him as a guide in a country with which Mag is

already familiar. As she begins her search for Floyd, Jenny admits that "in the dream of July, she knew very little, she was lost in wonder again. If she could find him now, or even find the place where he had last passed through, she would gain the next wisdom. It was a following after, now-- it was too late to find any way alone" (256).

Jenny's journey through the woods to the river provides several hints to the reader of the fate which awaits her, though Jenny does not interpret them as portents. The stifling "streaming hot shade" (257) which, with the thick vegetation, closes in upon her, foreshadows the entrapment of the men who one by one enter to rape her as well as the restriction and threat of the grounded houseboat with the drag of willow branches across its roof into which she is put (257). The male sexual threat to Jenny is suggested by the phallic imagery of the "great big-leaved vines" which make "pillars about the trunks of trees," and by the snakes which she fears (257); her violation is implied by the passion flowers which are crushed underfoot, the last buds of the lily, a traditional symbol of purity, and most tellingly, by the mimosa, "the tree that shrank from the touch, grotesque in its tenderness" (256). Horribly, the touch which has to Jenny represented participation in the expansive and the free is now exposed as a controlling grip, a recapitulation of "the terrifying weight of a claw" (242) which her grandfather's hand was to her. What she had

previously yearned for with Floyd as a tender sharing of otherness--an enrichment--in this final scene becomes a stripping away of her fragile identity--a depletion.

Jenny's response to her rape is complex and confusing. St. George Tucker Arnold, Jr. suggests that the multiple rapes are somehow necessary to her maturation and should therefore be regarded as positive. Dismissing the possibility that the rapes demonstrate "woman's vulnerability and helplessness," Arnold goes on to say that "Jenny survives and even profits from this victimization because of the unique qualities of her woman's nature, her rare ability as a woman to transform hurt into growth of the psyche" ("Woman's Psyche" 339). Elizabeth Rose Lemieux goes even further in her interpretation, suggesting that Jenny receives "sexual satisfaction from the fantasy pain" (73). Mary Anne Ferguson concludes that Jenny's rape is preferable to the stunted growth which she considers rape's alternative here. Rape is not a happy ending to the story, Ferguson continues, yet Jenny's acceptance of responsibility for herself goes beyond her mother's fate, enabling her to grow, not to remain captive and die (233).

Yet these views ignore the psychological trauma Jenny unquestionably experiences and the almost psychotic state she is left in as a result of her multiple violations. Yet Welty does write that "a rude laugh [her rapist's] covered her cry, and somehow both the harsh human sounds could

easily have been heard as rejoicing" (258). This, along with the smile that remains on Jenny's face "no matter what was done to her," are confusing additions to the description. Perhaps the best explanation that can be given for these details is that they are signs of Jenny's psychosis, her inability to deal with the violation of her fragile self. It seems a gross distortion of the context of Jenny's rape to consider it as effecting her sexual maturity, as Mary Anne Ferguson contends (229). Certainly it is not Jenny who can regard "the harsh human sounds" as "rejoicing." This more likely seems the perspective of the callous, insensitive men who surround the houseboat.

Jenny is now completely "a stranger lost," abused by the dark side of otherness which she is not psychically prepared even to acknowledge, let alone accept. Despite Ferguson's belief that the closing scene has a "fairy-tale aura" which hints at a happy ending to follow (234), I see no such affirmation allowed Jenny at the end of this story. Instead, the image of "the younger boys" throwing knives into trees closes the text, suggesting a continuing cycle of violence and abuse. Additionally, Jenny's previous association with birds of flight and song is negated in this scene by the chickens, originally connected with her restrictive grandfather, clustering around the houseboat. Jenny's hope for a beautiful spectrum of multiplicity is swallowed by the encroaching night and her entrance into

"some strange other country" (246) is blocked by "the meditating men" who stand outside the door of the grounded houseboat. The "strange other country" which Jenny imagined as existing at the bottom of Mag's well, a region of level land and secret skies, is now a pit, the sound made by the boys' knives as they hurl them into the trees.

Jenny's loss is ultimately a result of her failure first to see and then to deal with the darker aspects of Billy Floyd's identity. Her dream of love is an idealistic visioning of the fullness she sees in Floyd. Her role as dreamer, in other words, clouds her vision as observer of Billy Floyd's reality. After the circumstances of the flood, after her tenderness and mystery are violated, that vision becomes irretrievable, yet what she has newly observed of reality is also intolerable. Unable to reconcile dream with observation, Jenny slips away from both "countries." Expansiveness of identity thus eludes her, and destruction finds her.

The unnamed child of "A Memory" also initially separates her dual roles of observer and dreamer. There are, however, crucial differences between Jenny and this girl. The girl, for example, does not avoid realistic observation. Though she at first carefully separates it from her idealistic dream of love, she nevertheless observes the ugliness and horror of the beach scene, for example, for what it is and means to her. More importantly, the girl is

an active observer, not passive as is Jenny; she continually evaluates the relation of her self to what she observes and attempts to control and define what she sees. Ultimately, she can allow the coexistence of what were initially, to her, conflicting visions and open herself to otherness, which Jenny, in her passivity and because of her circumstances, could not do. What is produced by the combination of these two views is a vision which is at first repugnant to the young girl, yet ultimately vital to the formulation of her identity as female.

The protagonist of "A Memory" describes her life as "dual . . . as observer and dreamer" (76). As observer, she literally creates a frame with her fingers to reduce the scope and increase the manageability of the scenes before her. Through this act of framing, the girl demonstrates her ability to shape her experiences through her own creativity (McGowan 33). Yet clearly she knows the difference between the framed view she creates and the real view before her, which is unrestricted and far vaster (Kreyling 637). She does not, in other words, replace reality but provides an alternate view of it. The same end is accomplished by the first person narration of the story. The girl is presented as the I/eye of the story, as though she is writing, re-collecting, the story: she controls the telling, the frame of the story, as she manipulates the frame of her fingers (Kreyling 632).

By this practice she is able to construct an orderly scene--"people in fixed attitudes" (75--emphasis mine) rather than in unpredictable attitudes--populate her vision, carefully contained by "a border of dark rounded oak trees." The same need for order and control motivates her mental categorization of people:

I formed a judgment upon every person and every event which came under my eye[.] . . . When a person, or a happening, seemed to me not in keeping with my opinion, or even my hope or expectation, I was terrified by a vision of abandonment and wildness which tore my heart with a kind of sorrow. (75)

If any response or observation refuses her frame, in other words, the girl interprets it as a sort of loss to herself--an "abandonment"--and she is driven to re-fuse the frame. This practice, as Daniele Pitavy-Souques points out, reveals a desire to know the self, for "'the need to see the world familiarly is a result of the preoccupation with the self rather than with the world'" (qtd. in "Blazing Butterfly" 546).

Likewise, her role as dreamer is limited to a single scene which is rigidly defined--"I had identified love at once" (76). This memory, of an accidental touch exchanged with the boy she "loves" as they pass on the stairs, has been dreamed into a relationship and, remembered as such, is scrupulously preserved in content and in feeling through the girl's repeated mental re-enactment of it. The girl tries to deny her dream any connection with the outside world, the

realm of her role as observer, making it an entirely private and internalized event. Seen in the light of external observation, the dream is horribly altered, safe and singular no more. "The truth is that never since has any passion I have felt remained so hopelessly unexpressed within me or appeared so grotesquely altered in the outward world" (76). Predictably, when the girl's outer world--the observed--touches upon her inner dream, what results is an irreconcilable and disturbing chaos which the girl cannot accept. Thus when her dream of love is interrupted by the violently real nose bleed of her friend, she faints from the "tremendous shock" of the occurrence (76).

Yet despite her separation and compartmentalization of her dual roles, her careful regulation of what comprises each, still the girl admits a deep, fundamental need to know and experience a multiplicity of being which is an expansiveness of self, a "layered" awareness. Though she acknowledges that this is her need both as a dreamer and as observer, she does not yet realize or cannot yet accept that this multiplicity can only be attained through allowing her presently dual roles to coexist, to have a dialogic relationship with each other. Thus she expresses a need to expand her observation beyond the confining frames she places upon outer realities, to encompass all of life, including the layers of mysteries and meanings which underlie realities.

I do not know even now what it was that I was waiting to see; but in those days I was convinced that I almost saw it at every turn. To watch everything about me I regarded grimly and possessively as a need. . . . From any observation I would conclude that a secret of life had been nearly revealed to me--for I was obsessed with notions about concealment, and from the smallest gesture of a stranger I would wrest what was to me a communication or a presentiment. (76)

In her dream as well she seeks "a mystery deeper than danger which hung about [her boy friend]. I watched everything he did, trying to learn and translate and verify" (77).

Interestingly, Welty seems to subtly suggest that this process of joining the roles of observer and dreamer has already begun, that in fact, no strict dichotomization of the two is ever possible. By framing what she observes, the girl is altering and limiting reality through her own subjectivity; the framing thus becomes a form of dreaming because it marks a realm of her own creation--which is what dreams essentially are. Yet dream is not entirely divorced from reality either; the fact that her dream of love is based on an actual observed--and felt--event, a touching of the boy's hands on the stairs, reveals that even dream has basis in observation. Dream is contained by reality too: the girl maintains her dream by continually watching the boy in class. Thus, when the girl suspects that a "secret of life"--like the unconscious of dreams--lies below the surface of observed reality and that "mystery" is contained in her dream and discovered through observation of her

friend, she begins to be aware that the dual roles she tries to dichotomize are actually intricately interwoven.

The full awareness of this interconnectedness, of all-inclusive fullness of vision, is almost forcibly thrust upon the girl during her day at the beach which "A Memory" recounts. Here, through her observation of the "ill-assorted" family of bathers, her roles as dreamer and observer become intertwined, her orderly structures are collapsed, and her internal and external realities are mingled, creating an at-first disturbing multiplicity which is nonetheless necessary to her construction of a mature female identity.

Welty uses the image of "a needle going in and out among my thoughts" (77) to describe the way in which the outward disorder inserts itself into her ordered dream. The image suggest the painful intrusiveness of the bathers, yet it also implies a repair of fragmentation, the interweaving of "dichotomous" elements to create a fabric composed of multiple and varied threads. The bathers, a family of five, refuse her frame--they are "a group of loud, squirming, ill-assorted people who seemed thrown together only by the most confused accident" (77). Even individually they cannot be contained, as is suggested through the undersized bathing suits of each: the older woman's suit has "no relation to the shape of her body" and the younger girl's body seems ready to burst from the bottle-like confines of her green

bathing suit (78). The older boy also "protrude[s] from his costume at every turn" (77). Replacing her exact rectangular frames are the "wobbly ellipses" which the two boys trace around the man and two women who lie together in "leglike confusion" (77). Alternately breaking into the borders of the ellipsis to throw sand at the bathers then retreating beyond its parameters, the boys' "frame" deconstructs the girl's sense of control and order.

This disturbing family group infuses the entire landscape with disorder. The "upthrust oak trees" disregard the imaginary boundaries created by the "clean painted roof of the white pavilion" and by the girl's ever-framing fingers; once "fixed" attitudes are now "slowly changing," and the two parts of her dual life become "simultaneous" and equally real: "I still would not care to say which was more real--the dream I could make blossom at will, or the sight of the bathers" (77).

Most frightening to the girl, however, are the discoveries she makes about herself as a woman, discoveries that, though initially upsetting, ultimately enable the young girl to come to terms with her body and to better comprehend her options as a female. On the edge of adolescence, the girl seems largely unaware of the changes her body will soon undergo and of the nature of physical male/female relationships. Understandably, then, she is both fascinated and repulsed by the older woman's body.

Fat hung upon her upper arms like an arrested earthslide on a hill. With the first motion she might make, I was afraid that she would slide down upon herself into a terrifying heap. Her breasts hung heavy and widening like pears into her bathing suit. Her legs lay prone one on the other like shadowed bulwarks, uneven and deserted, upon which, from the man's hand, the sand piles higher like the teasing threat of oblivion. (78--emphasis mine)

Focusing upon the woman's breasts and thighs, the girl describes them as vulnerable to destructive change, change which is inevitable and irreversible and accomplished at the hands of man: "the teasing threat of oblivion." The imagery used specifically links destruction of the body with total loss of identity, suggesting that for her mature identity will be defined largely by her biological femaleness.

The girl's horror is intensified when the man pours sand between the woman's breasts. "I saw the man lift his hand filled with crumbling sand . . . and pour it down inside her bathing suit between her bulbous descending breasts. There it hung, brown and shapeless" (78--emphases mine). Described as ripe fruit ready for consumption in the previous passage, the woman's breasts, the part of her body which most readily identifies her physically as female and which are in women a source of erotic pleasure, seem to the girl further victimized by the man's act. This is particularly seen when the woman leans over to remove the sand: "the lumps of mashed and folded sand came emptying out. I felt a peak of horror, as though her breasts

themselves had turned to sand, as though they were of no importance at all and she did not care" (79--emphases mine). The girl seems to see this scene as somehow depleting of the woman's identity, and not just of her physical body: she is as appalled by the woman's indifference to her loss as by the loss itself.

The greater, implicit horror behind the woman's ravaged body, her dis-integration, however, is that it is accomplished "from the man's hand" (78), an imperfect assumption on the girl's part of woman's sexual vulnerability to men. Shutting her eyes to the adult male/female interaction does not block them out but rather discloses more fully the couple's sexuality, a sexuality which at this point is still frightening and foreign to her. Their coarse play is in the imagination of her closed eyes transformed into a terrifying primal scene: "I lay there with my eyes pressed shut, listening to their moans and their frantic squeals. It seemed to me that I could hear also the thud and the fat impact of all their ugly bodies upon one another" (79).

Attempting to deny the scene's implications for her self, the girl characterizes the man as merely animalistic-- he smiles "the way panting dogs seem to be smiling" (78)-- and tries to retreat into the "protection" (79) of her dream, into its singularity of vision, its self-created order. "I tried to withdraw to my most inner dream, that of

touching the wrist of the boy I loved on the stair" (79). The fact that she can no longer recall this single scene to mind suggests that she has been irrevocably influenced by what she sees as the chaos to which she has been exposed: she considers herself "victimized" (79) and thus rejects her inclusion in these adult possibilities, as she rejects the man's gaze, which "include[s]" her and prompts her to wish "that they all were dead" (78). The knowledge she gains this day--of her sexuality and gender--no doubt is precisely what her parents have guarded her from:

My father and mother, who believed that I saw nothing in the world which was not strictly coaxed into place like a vine on our garden trellis to be presented to my eyes, would have been badly concerned if they had guessed how frequently the weak and inferior and strangely turned examples of what was to come showed themselves to me. (75--emphasis mine)

Without question, the girl's exposure to this chaotic episode, with all the implications it holds for her femaleness and sexuality, is a disturbing experience. Yet it does not remain so. Even before the end of the day, the girl is beginning to assimilate this experience and thus enlarge her identity to include a fuller range of possibilities, an acceptance of otherness. This is, as Pitavy-Souques points out, a necessary step in the artist's truthful representation of the world ("Blazing Butterfly" 547). For example, instead of fainting (her earlier response to the coexistence of opposites--her dream of love and her friend's nosebleed--), the girl now alternately

closes and opens her eyes to the scene before her, suggesting her partial openness to the otherness she observes. Also, through this act she creates new sets of contrasts, which enable her to see that contrasts need not be oppositional, but only "alternate experiences": "I lay there, opening and closing my eyes. The brilliance and then the blackness were like some alternate experiences of night and day" (79). Thus, rather than rejecting this experience of multiplicity as incompatible with the singularity of her dream of love, the girl instead multiplies her dream, imagining for it new scenes and possibilities. "I could imagine the boy I loved walking into a classroom, where I would watch him with this hour on the beach accompanying my recovered dream and adding to my love" (80--emphasis mine). This connection with audience, as well as a certain separation from it, is, as Ruth Weston points out, essential for artistic creation ("Feminine and Feminist" 86). Through the girl's allowing the two scenes to coexist, she not only recreates the view before her, but, more importantly, recreates her conception of self.

This newest "memory" she can imagine fuller possibilities for herself, as is suggested by the fact that she describes the boy she loves with terms that she might earlier have reserved for herself. He, not she, is "speechless and innocent," lacking the knowledge she has gained about her identity; he is "unconscious" in a way she

never again can be. Most significantly, now the girl is not limited to the "solitary" (80) consciousness of her dream world, but has added to it the world of a sometimes disturbing reality. In so doing, she has faced a woman who is both the Medusa in her appearance of monstrosity to the girl and Medusa's victim in her breasts turning to sand/stone. Yet the girl herself is not paralyzed but enabled by the encounter, opening herself up to the broader possibilities of a mature female identity which, if frightening, nevertheless offer her a new and changing range of being.

Though the girl of "A Memory" is more noticeable horrified by her confrontation with adult sexuality than is Jenny of "At The Landing," it is Jenny who proves unable to deal with the encounter. Jenny's inability, of course, can be largely explained by her forced initiation. Yet circumstances alone seem not enough to explain Jenny's destruction. The girl of "A Memory" can accept what is to her at first a frightening sexuality perhaps because by adding it to her dream of love she can imagine sexuality existing within different, less threatening contexts--within romantic love, for example. By combining her two "worlds," in other words, both worlds are given added dimensions.

For Ruby of "A Piece of News," as will be shown, sexuality is a natural, enriching expression of her identity, whether in the relationships that she seeks out

with men or in the autoerotic pleasure she receives from the movements of her body. Livvie, too, unhesitatingly accepts Cash, because she can "increase and multiply" both through having children by him and by allowing her identity a fuller and more varied range through her relationship with him. It is implied, however, that sexuality for Jenny is an overwhelming experience, drowning her carefully withheld "center" of identity which for her must remain somehow pure and virginal. Though I use these terms only metaphorically, I think they are appropriate in describing how Billy Floyd's and the fishermen's abuse of Jenny violates an aspect of identity which for Jenny must necessarily remain inviolate.

Sexuality is not an enunciated issue in "A Curtain of Green," yet it is an implied element of Mrs. Larkin's growth from a confining chaos of identity into a fuller, unbounded expression of her self. "A Curtain of Green" demonstrates that multiplicity can allow an incredible range of expression--including sexuality--while preserving identity's personal subjectivity and independent voice. Mrs. Larkin does finally participate in fuller possibilities, but only after she weeds through the disturbing chaos of personal loss.

Mrs. Larkin's loss is her husband's death through a freak accident in which a tree falls upon his car, crushing him to death. To escape this harsh truth and its implications for her role as a woman, Mrs. Larkin constructs

a "curtain of green" as a shield from this reality. The curtain is the garden which Mrs. Larkin obsessively cultivates, a garden whose literal hedged boundaries confine Mrs. Larkin to the parameters--house and yard--which define her exclusively by relation to her husband. She is referred to only as Mrs. Larkin, living in a town which also bears her husband's family name. The garden spreads out from a central pear tree. Throughout much of the story, ignoring it as a potential signifier of her personal female sexuality and independent growth as a woman, Mrs. Larkin instead regards it as a pair tree, a tree under which she can now only stand alone, possessing less of her self through her husband's absence, using it, as she perhaps used her husband before his death, as a retreat from the rain which in the story ultimately enables her independent growth and subjectivity.

Apparently believing that her husband's death marks the end of her own life as well, then, Mrs. Larkin attempts a sort of primal retreat, a dissolving of personal identity into the vegetable life around her. In the garden's fertility and unrestricted growth, Mrs. Larkin duplicates the chaos that she feels within herself. In the chaos of the garden, as in the chaos of her identity, Mrs. Larkin loses herself, forfeiting independent identity and becoming "invisible" (108).

Mrs. Larkin rarely cut, separated, tied back.
 . . . to a certain extent, she seemed not to seek
 for order, but to allow an over-flowing, as if she

consciously ventured forever a little farther, a little deeper, into her life in the garden. . . . To the neighbors gazing down from their upstairs windows it had the appearance of a sort of jungle, in which the slight, heedless form of its owner daily lost itself. (108)

Peter Schmidt provides a more positive reading of Mrs. Larkin's garden, regarding it as a rebellion against the convention of a "woman's garden," an ordered and carefully tended display of beauty (25). Schmidt contends that the garden's chaotic profusion represents her frustration at the limited options available to her as a widow (26). I question, however, the consciousness of Mrs. Larkin's rebellion, and whether, if unconscious, it can be a rebellion at all.

So entire is Mrs. Larkin's immersion in "her life in the garden" that she is represented as "blind" (107) to the only force--the sun's penetrating rays--which is capable of distinguishing her as separate and unique. Thus she kneels in the shadow of her garden plants, assuming their posture and limiting her range of vision, her eyes "dull and puckered" (109). Her unwashed overalls gradually take on the hue of the leaves around her, a further indication of her loss of human identity.

Perhaps the most dramatic evidence of Mrs. Larkin's loss of subjectivity, however, is her complete voicelessness. Her mouth is an unopened "sharp line" (109), her voice unable to penetrate the denseness of the garden (110). Mrs. Larkin's present silence sharply contrasts with

her earlier faith in the power of language. Until the moment of her husband's death, Mrs. Larkin believed that language, and her voice which transmitted it, could transform and even create reality, that words and the relationality they expressed possessed an incalculable strength. As the tree fell upon her husband,

she had spoken in a soft voice to him, never so intimate as at that moment, 'You can't be hurt.' . . . She had waited there on the porch for a time afterward . . . as if to reach under and bring out from obliteration her protective words and to try them once again . . . so as to change the whole happening. (109)

Now, with an awareness of language's inadequacy to alter or create, Mrs. Larkin abandons voice altogether, willfully forfeiting the most essential element of her subjectivity.

A summer shower, however, provides the impetus for change in Mrs. Larkin, the opportunity for her to open herself to a more encompassing identity rather than be lost in an undifferentiated chaos. As if in contrast to the multiple possibilities to which she will soon awaken, silence, stillness, and numbness combine to intensify and delineate Mrs. Larkin's condition, to bring her to a moment of crisis.

Presently she became aware that hers was the only motion to continue in the whole slackened place. There was no wind at all now. The cries of the birds had hushed. The sun seemed clamped to the side of the sky. Everything had stopped once again, the stillness had mesmerized the stems of the plants, and all the leaves went suddenly into thickness. (109)

Most important to this scene is the pear tree, whose shadow "in the center of the garden lay callous on the ground" (109), recalling both the tragic shadow of the fallen tree which killed her husband and the numbness and callousness which characterize her now, her inability to break through the confines of her own restriction. Implicit in this image of the "fallen" pear tree with its female shaped fruit is the possibility that the loss which Mrs. Larkin experienced at her husband's death was a loss also to herself as a woman. She has lost her ability to express her sexuality, has covered her female body with masculine overalls, and has denied her emotional responses as a woman.

Yet there is also terror for Mrs. Larkin in opening herself up to these possibilities, particularly outside of the respectable conventions of marriage and family. This fear is represented by an imaginary break in the defining hedge which surrounds the garden which is her self: "She felt all at once terrified, as though her loneliness had been pointed out by some outside force whose finger parted the hedge" (110). Accompanying this fear of self-exposure and expansion of identity, however, is a perhaps greater fear that her year of withholding her self, of submerging her identity and its desires, has left her identity stunted, incapable of growth, of the branching out necessary for its expansion and productivity. "She drew her hand for an instant to her breast. An obscure fluttering there

frightened her, as though the force babbled to her, The bird that flies within your heart could not divide this cloudy air" (110).

Unable to face or deal with those qualities within herself which might inhibit such change, Mrs. Larkin attributes these qualities to Jamey, her hired boy, and projects upon him the anger and frustration she feels towards herself. Looking at him kneeling with his back to her, Mrs. Larkin sees in him the "docility," the "helpless suspicion and hunger," the oblivion to the world outside the "impossible dream of his own" (110) which actually are the qualities of her own despairing identity. Importantly, Mrs. Larkin feels a nearly uncontrollable urge to destroy these tendencies, to break into Jamey's oblivion, to make him feel her presence, to herself be able to feel. In a desperate attempt to feel and be felt, Mrs. Larkin stands with a hoe posed above Jamey's head, ready to strike.

She gripped the handle [of the hoe] tightly, tightly, as though convinced that the wood of the handle could feel, and that all her strength could indent its surface with pain. The head of Jamey, bent there below her, seemed witless, terrifying, wonderful, almost inaccessible to her, and yet in its explicit nearness meant surely for destruction . . . the bowed head holding so obviously and so fatally its ridiculous dream. (110)

In this moment, Mrs. Larkin becomes aware that the "ridiculous dream"--which is in her head, not Jamey's--must be destroyed before it destroys her. To live with the impossible hope that life can return to what it once was is

to live in an irretrievable past and to drastically shut herself off from the possibilities of the present. Helen Hurt Tiegreen similarly believes that to keep memory intact is to deny the full reality of the present (620).

Initiating Mrs. Larkin's growth into multiplicity is the rain. What the rain has provided all summer to her garden is now made available to Mrs. Larkin. No longer retreating from it into the protection of her pear/pair tree, Mrs. Larkin now allows the rain to nourish her, multiplying her possibilities with every drop that falls upon her. The description of the rain's effect upon the plants around her reveals the change in Mrs. Larkin's identity. The garden shifts from being an undifferentiated, chaotic profusion into which Mrs. Larkin can easily lose herself; now, the individuality and separateness of each plant are emphasized, and its participation in a free multiplicity.

In the light from the rain, different from sunlight, everything appeared to gleam unreflecting from within itself in its quiet arcade of identity. The green of the small zinnia shoots was very pure, almost burning. One by one, as the rain reached them, all the individual little plants shone out, and then the branching vines. (111)

The plants appear now in a new and different light: they are Same, yet different. Interiors are revealed, all have their own light yet share in the rain-light which illuminates them all. The individual "arcades" of identity implicitly create passageways to more beyond, and arch

outward--as do the "branching vines"--toward connection and expansion.

As is true in the majority of her texts, Welty suggests through these details that the ideal for female identity is a free and full acceptance of a plurality of possibilities for the self, without forfeiture of independence, separateness, and subjectivity: an embracing of all within the self, with the self not compromised but fulfilled by the variety.

Like the plants, Mrs. Larkin now allows herself an independent subjectivity which can participate in the fullness and multiplicity around her. Lying on the ground among the plants, letting her body share in her garden's plurality, and with her face "fully upturned" to the rain (111), Mrs. Larkin opens herself to a fuller range of unbounded experience and emotion: "then as if it had swelled and broken over a daily levee, tenderness tore and spun through her sagging body" (111). Her earlier fear, that "the bird that flies within your heart could not divide this cloudy air" (110), is laid to rest, for with her acceptance of the rain's all-encompassing nourishment, "the pear tree gave a soft rushing noise, like the wings of a bird alighting" and the rain "dissolve[s]" the clouds (111--emphasis mine). Here, of course, the "bird that flies within [her] heart" is released, and its freedom, augmented by the reviving rain, divides the "cloudy air" that before

seemed impenetrable. What she could not accomplish for her husband, through language or through physical effort, she can accomplish for herself: the terrible weight of the chinaberry tree, "suddenly tilting, dark and slow like a cloud" (109) as it fell upon her husband or the ominous "shadow of the pear tree . . . callous on the ground" (109) as it described her own horrifying numbness are both lifted in this moment, freeing Mrs. Larkin of the burden of memory and of insensateness. Both memory and insensateness have restricted Mrs. Larkin to a numb and dumb solitude, inhibiting her growth and expansion of self.

With the "soft rushing noise" of the rain in the pear tree comes the return of Mrs. Larkin's own power of voice, a subtle but sure reclamation. The rain which drenches and empowers Mrs. Larkin has its own language--"small, close sounds and coolness touched her . . . she listened for its scattered soft drops between Jamey's words . . . and a clear sound like a bell as it began to fall into a pitcher the cook had set on the doorstep" (111). As the sound of the rain collects in the pitcher, so Mrs. Larkin's voice multiplies within her, for the once "sharp line" of her mouth opens to the touch of the rain on her lips (112).

Jamey's casual pronunciation of her name, "'Miss Lark'! Miss Lark'!'" which ends the story serves as a sort of promise that "the bird that flies within [Mrs. Larkin's] heart" (110), now released, will indeed sing again. With

his words, she is also converted from a Mrs. to a Miss, freed from the definition her marriage once provided and open to new identities. Though she is an individual, however, she is not isolated but a part of all the fullness which surrounds her. Her face "fully upturned," Mrs. Larkin receives the rain, the endless growth and possibility it signifies: "On and on it would fall, beat and fall. . . . [A]gainst that which was inexhaustible, there was no defense" (111)."

Autonomy and individuality, therefore, are not contradictory to multiplicity, nor are they antithetical to relationality. Rather, autonomy often enables a fuller receptivity to all of life in Welty's women. Because they are unrestricted, they can give a greater range to their identities. Burdened by memory, bound by that memory to a lifeless marriage, Mrs. Larkin, through her individual growth, opens herself up to a new expanse of possibility and connection. Relationship does not compromise such independence, but can in fact strengthen it. Mag's individuality in "At The Landing" is not mitigated by her relationship with Billy Floyd, for example, but is given fuller expression. In "Kin," the story which follows, relationship is in fact the avenue through which Dicey's independence is developed. This autonomy enables her to look beyond limiting definitions, to broaden her own perspectives, and to give more range to her identity.

The catalyst for Dicey's change is a trip to Mingo to visit her Great-uncle Felix. Prior to this visit, Dicey is shown to be a young woman nearly obsessed with the need for definition, largely for the security, knowability, and manageability it affords. Through naming, Dicey can comprehend and to a great extent control the relationships she has with others and shape her own sense of self. The first line of the text reveals this preoccupation, for the story opens with Dicey questioning the very nature of Mingo: "'Mingo?' I repeated, and for the first moment I didn't know what my aunt meant. The name sounded in my ears like something instead of somewhere" (538--emphasis in original). This same need to stabilize and limit through defining is seen in her insistence on exactly specified relationships. Thus Kate is her "double first cousin," Uncle Felix is Aunt Ethel's "uncle, only my great-uncle" (538), and "Sister" is a disturbing misnomer for Sister Anne since "there was no sister at all left of my Aunt Ethel's" (539). "'But who is she, pure and simple?'" (540) Dicey demands, and her interest is more than rhetorical.

Dicey creates for herself delineated and intractable possibilities, mostly rooted in conventional perspectives. Hence, she declares that she will "be old in ten years" (541), using as her standard of measurement an arbitrary chronology rather than more personal determinants such as vigor or attitude. More tellingly, Dicey is determined to

avoid being defined as an "old maid" and clarifies her definite plans to marry, thus fulfilling her expected role as a woman.

Kate and I were double first cousins, I was the younger, and neither married yet, but I was not going to be an old maid! I was already engaged up North; though I had not yet come to setting a date for my wedding. Kate, though, as far as I could tell, didn't have anybody. (538)

Dicey's self-definitions are exclusive, not inclusive, admitting no plurality. Thus when she is faced with two "opposite" definitions for herself--stranger and native--both of which seem at least partially appropriate, then, Dicey's sense of self is unsettled. Unwilling to allow both possibilities to coexist as differing elements of her identity, Dicey feels a need to make a singular choice; this tendency is evident in her vacillating consideration of herself as native or stranger, but not possibly both. The qualifications she makes to her claim of being a "stranger" reflect her lack of conviction in accepting that position. "I knew that really I was a stranger in a way, still, just at first" (539--emphasis mine). Clearly, Dicey's identity is defined by her need to define: "things, even fatal things, did have names. I wanted to know" (544).

Dicey's need for the singularity and stability of definition is not a need unique to her, but is a trait shared by her Aunt Ethel and cousin Kate. Both Aunt Ethel and Kate "[live] as if they had never heard of anywhere else, even Jackson" in houses "spread out at the bottom

. . . and winged all over with awnings and blinds" (539--emphases mine), suggesting their solid rooting in the knowable and definable and the singularity of vision which enables it. Kate too, for example, wants to "place" Sister Anne, to control her and her relation to her through naming. "'Mama, what is she? . . . I may be as bad as Dicey, but I don't intend to go out there today without you and not have her straight'" (540). Aunt Ethel likewise names: Uncle Felix is "a very strict gentleman" (541), Sister Anne is "lazy, idle . . . a lily of the field" (544). None of them seem to consider that identity may be a shifting montage, an accumulation and coexistence of various and even seemingly contradictory qualities which a person possesses at different points in his or her life. In speaking of Uncle Felix, for example, Aunt Ethel considers it odd to remember him as he was, since what he was has no apparent connection with what he is now: "'What I remember about him is what I used to be told as a child, isn't that strange? When I knew him all my life and loved him. For instance, that he was a great one for serenading as a young man'" (543). Dicey emphasizes the permanence of memory over his changed present condition, constructing Uncle Felix's identity solely through her remembrance of him. "'He had red roses on his suspenders'" (541), Dicey states firmly, establishing his roses as unchanging entities which contrast with the

"yawning big roses opening and shattering in one day" (539) which exist in her aunt's garden.

There are, however, a few subtle hints that Dicey may have the capacity to move beyond the limitations of defining and the singularity of identity which is its result. Aunt Ethel's description of Dicey's mother's visits is one.

'She stayed long enough to make us believe she'd fully got here. There'd be time enough to have alterations, from Miss Mattie, too, and transplant things in the yard if it was the season, even start a hook-rug--do a morning glory, at least--even if she'd never really see the grand finale. (541)

Aunt Ethel's description associates Dicey's mother (who is now dead) with change ("alterations"), movement and growth ("transplant"), and lack of closure (no "grand finale"); these are elements of a fullness of identity ("she'd fully got here") which her mother possessed and to which Dicey may also be heir. This possibility, prior to Dicey's visit to Mingo, is primarily suggested through Dicey's strong sense of voice. According to Kate, Dicey "'[g]ot off the train talking, and hasn't stopped yet'" (539) and from the first paragraph, it is clear that what Dicey tells is her own story, which is never--and perhaps can never--fully be told, but always seeks further expression. Without realizing it, Dicey thus undercuts her own hope in final definitions. "I'd been making a start, just a little start, on my own news" (538), Dicey reports, and later reiterates her need for self-expression, a telling

of the self which can move beyond the restriction of definition and naming. "I considered myself as having a great deal still waiting to confide. My lips opened" (542).

What is muted in the first part of the story is given full expression in the latter. Dicey's trip to Mingo teaches her that definition is never absolute or infallible, enables her to recapture her childhood expansiveness of vision and imagination, and most importantly, allows her to see identity as a multiplicitous range of being rather than a singular, definite and static state. Dicey's transformation begins almost immediately. Even before she arrives at Mingo, Dicey declares that she is "'not ever tired in a strange place'" (546), indicating a subtle openness to otherness/strangeness, her willingness to experience things outside of definition. Her first sight of the house immediately tests the adequacy of her definitions, for "it looked right in size and shape, but not in something else--it had a queer intensity for afternoon" (547). All the features of the house which Dicey had meticulously remembered seem strangely altered: even time itself, the essence of predictability and regularity, is changed. "I looked and saw the corner clock was wrong. I was deeply aware that all clocks worked in this house, as if they had been keeping time just for me all this while" (549). Contributing also to the strangeness of the house is the itinerant photographer who is using Uncle Felix's parlor as

his studio, posing a steady stream of "good country people" for his camera. The blinding flash of his camera bulb alters reality, "changing white to black, black to white--I saw the roses shudder and charge in my hands" (550).

All these changes cause Dicey to question the stability and correctness of her definitions and beyond that, the security of her identity itself, since naming and definition have been so intrinsic to her sense of self. Dicey's comment, "'I feel like a being from another world'" (551), reveals the extent of her disorientation, the convolutions which her identity is undergoing. Already there is a noticeable flexibility in her perspective, a willingness to view things from multiple angles--from "another world." For example, Sister Anne looks younger than Dicey has remembered her, and her hair is a different color and less severely styled (548). Her hands, which Dicey firmly labels as "scratchless" as Sister Anne arranges roses in a vase (551), are later admitted to be bleeding (553), a minor detail yet one which shows that Dicey can also admit that Sister Anne has a more tender, vulnerable side than her family has been willing to admit.

These are the tentative first stirrings of a greater change in Dicey's identity. This change is largely accomplished through Dicey's connection--present and remembered--with Uncle Felix, who by the time of the story is an aged invalid, cared for by Sister Anne. It is,

nonetheless, Uncle Felix who, with the vigor he still possesses, rather forcefully establishes the connection between them. Twice struggling to grasp Dicey's arm as she stands at his bedside, Uncle Felix's movements are described as bear-like: "before I knew it, his hand raked my bare arm down. I felt as if I had been clawed" (556). When he finally manages to pull her down to the floor in order to retrieve a pencil, their movement is not strained but oddly graceful, a productive pairing of dancing bear and partner. "For a moment our arms crossed, but it was not awkward or strange, more as though we two were going to skate off, or dance off, out of here" (554). This scene not only connects Dicey to Uncle Felix relationally, but makes explicit her access to the multiplicity he embodies, the many stars which make up his identity as the "Big Bear," Ursa Major.

Tiptoeing modestly, we left him by himself. In his bleached gown he looked like the story-book picture of the Big Bear, the old white one with star children on his back and more star children following, in triangle dress, starting down the Milky Way. (559)

Given the fact that earlier Dicey had exclaimed "'Do you know--I'd forgotten the Milky Way!'" (545), her remembrance of it here and her imaginative description of Uncle Felix as the most prominent component of that galaxy are forceful suggestions of her new expansiveness of identity and the extent to which Uncle Felix already possesses such plurality.

This truth is wonderfully expressed in Dicey's memories of Sunday afternoons spent sharing the stereopticon with Uncle Felix. This device, which enables them both to explore a multitude of worlds via the cards which they silently slide in front of the viewer, brings to them not only multiplied worlds, but expanded happiness ("That expectation--even alarm--that the awareness of happiness can bring! Of any happiness. It need not even be yours" [557]), enlarged awareness ("It is like being able to prophesy, all of a sudden" [557]), and most importantly, full participation in an Otherness which is beautiful because it is both private and shared. Thus they can "[pass] each other those sand-pink cities and passionate fountains" (558) and delight in the exchange, yet Uncle Felix can also, "with his giant size and absorption [go on] looking his fill. It was as though, while he held the stereopticon to his eye, we did not see him" (558--emphasis in original). The vision he has here is personal and uniquely his, unknowable to the others. Dicey too has a personal response: the slides are "brought forward each time so close that it seemed to me the tracings from the beautiful face of a strange coin were being laid against my brain" (558).

The other family members also benefit from Uncle Felix's influence: his own fluid voice encourages their own expression ("then I heard the cataract of talk, which I knew

he engendered" [557]) and his love stretches the tight circle of family to accept still more: "So many people were gathered at Mingo that the Sunday table was pulled out to the limit, from a circle to the shape of our race track" (557). But only Dicey fully experiences Uncle Felix's intimacy and spaciousness of vision. As she and Uncle Felix pass the stereopticon between them, the rest of the family sleeps, unconscious to this flow and exchange.

The remembered episode becomes more than memory to Dicey in her adult visit to Mingo. She becomes possessed with the desire to again "lift that old, beloved, once mysterious contraption to my eyes, and dissolve my sight, all our sights, in that" (557). This dissolution is not an annihilation of identity, but a merger of many identities, many visions into a fluid exchange of perspectives. Though she does not use the stereopticon, through remembering when she did, Dicey is able to see her present world through different lenses. She is suddenly bothered, for example, by the fact that the background for the photographs taken by the photographer is "the same old thing, a scene that never was, a black and white and gray blur of unrolled, yanked-down moonlight" (560), masking reality, which has more depth and fullness, more variety to explore than she had imagined.

Previously content to see only the surface of things and to construct definitions based on those surfaces, Dicey now searches beyond the immediately visible. Significantly,

what Dicey first uncovers is a portrait of her Great-grandmother Jerrold, a choice which reveals her desire to explore her past, particularly the past as lived by women, and through that recovery to know both her history and herself more fully. First looking beyond the photographer's backdrop which conceals the portrait, then past the artistic conventions which mask reality, Dicey searches for a sense of the living woman. Aware that only the head of the portrait is a representation of her relative, "fitted to the ready-made portrait by the painter who had called at the door" (561), Dicey rejects the untruth of the portrait's setting "so unlike the Mississippi wilderness," the frippery of the yellow skirt which mocks the actuality of the yellow fever which ended her great-grandmother's life. Her exploration continues until she uncovers a sense of the real woman, the woman who was not an object of art but a subjective self. In finding her, she actually finds herself.

[N]one of it, world or body, was really hers [Great-grandmother Jerrold's]. She had eaten bear meat, seen Indians, she had married into the wilderness at Mingo, to what unknown feelings. . . . And still those eyes, opaque, all pupil, belonged to Evelina--I knew, because they saw out, as mine did; weren't warned, as mine weren't, and never shut before the end, as mine would not. I, her divided sister, knew who had felt the wildness of the world behind the ladies' view. We were homesick for somewhere that was the same place. (561)

Like Evelina Jerrold, Dicey too has a sense of living in two worlds, as stranger and as native. She finds it

"strange to think that . . . I've gone to live in one of those picture cities" (558--emphasis mine) that she and Uncle Felix spent hours viewing through the stereopticon, yet she does live there. Yet it is not "the ladies' view" (as in the slides "The Ladies' View, Lakes of Killarney" [557])--demure, correct, and, after all, only a picture--but real, even "wild," altered by her presence. She is not a citizen of only this country but is also part of the inner and outer realities of Mingo, the great expansive world it is to her, wild in a different way.

I took so for granted once, and when had I left for ever, I wondered at that moment, the old soft airs of Mingo as I knew them--the interior airs . . . and outside . . . that whole big congregated outside smell, like the ripple of an animal's shining skin, used suddenly to travel across and over to my figure standing on the porch, like a marvel of lightning, and by it I could see myself, . . . by myself, but wild myself, at the mercy of that touch. (563)

No longer does Dicey believe that she must choose between two definitions for herself--stranger or native. Now she knows that she can--and does--participate in both worlds, and lives within each as both stranger and native. Thus she can leave Mingo "forever" yet always remain "at the mercy of that touch."

It is perhaps her own growing capacity for multiple identities which enables her alone to see Uncle Felix's condition not as senile confusion but as plural identities, each identity equally real. He is a weak old man and a young Civil War soldier and a passionate lover to the Daisy

to whom he writes his note. Dicey knows, as Aunt Ethel and Kate do not, that Uncle Felix's identity as a serenader is not an abandoned aspect of his past, but a real element of his present identity.

Perhaps because he senses Dicey's ability to comprehend his variety of identities, perhaps because her name prompts in him a recollection of his lover Daisy, Uncle Felix chooses to entrust his note, written with the retrieved pencil on the flyleaf of a hymnal, to Dicey. His choice is sound, for Kate demonstrates that she has neither the imagination nor the expansiveness of identity to interpret his message beyond the rigid limits of her expectations. The note reads simply "'River--Daisy--Midnight--Please'" (561). Kate, with her "literal" mind, as Dicey calls it (564), can only interpret these words within a framework of convention and propriety, and insists that Uncle Felix must have meant Beck: "'that was his wife, and he meant her to meet him in Heaven'" (561). She even goes so far as to question their meeting at midnight, stating flatly that "'they always go to bed at dark, out here'" (564). With an unequivocal, dismissive ease which only hours earlier was just as characteristic of Dicey as of Kate, Kate denies the truth and the importance of the entire message. "'I expect by now Uncle Felix has got his names mixed up, and Daisy was a mistake'" (564).

This statement now seems alien and "alienat[ing]" to Dicey. "I don't know why, yet, but some things are too important for a mistake even to be considered," Dicey thinks. "I was sorry I had showed Kate the message" (564). Importantly, the only word of the note which Kate does not question--please--is the one word which "hurt[s]" (564) Dicey the most, showing her sensitivity to the urgency, passion, and desperation behind the words, the inner reality which exists, again, in a layer of Uncle Felix's identity which is inaccessible to Kate. Dicey recognizes also that the message is both "'a kind of shorthand,'" leaving much unsaid and even unknowable, and "a very long letter" in its suggestiveness, the wealth of memory which must have accompanied it: "didn't it take Uncle Felix a long time to write it!" (564) Dicey imagines for herself the same range of possibilities and solidifies her identification with Uncle Felix when she wonders whether her own lover is writing to her (566).

The final pages of the story beautifully reaffirm that Dicey has opened her identity to a fuller spectrum of possibilities. As Kate and Dicey leave Mingo, traveling home in the gathering darkness, there is, to use a word Welty delighted in, a confluence of night sounds, smells, and sights, yet they exist not in singularity but in a fluid mingling suggested by the home's name, Mingo. The dust sent up by the departures of the country people who had come to

be photographed lingers in the air, "roads in their own shapes in the air, the exhalations of where the people all had come from" (565), a crisscrossing of many destinations. Dusk, as it settles in, is "all one substance now, one breath and density of blue" (565), and the little black cows, as they line up at the fence, are indistinguishable from the darkness. "Where each went looked like simply where nothing was" (566). Both images point out Dicey's realization that there can be no sharp delineations, no absolute definition of identity. Identity, like the dusk, changes shape, embraces all, and includes aspects which will always remain mysterious and unrevealed. Hence Dicey sees the faces of those who remain on the porch as "quiet and obscure and never known . . . like dark boxes of secrets and desires to me, but locked safely, like old-fashioned caskets for the safe conduct of jewels on a voyage" (565). Dicey rides into this mystery and fullness, the suddenly multiplied night echoing in her ears.

All around, something went on and on. It was hard without thinking to tell whether it was a throbbing, a dance, a rattle, or a ringing--all louder as we neared the bridge. It was everything in the grass and trees. . . . Then all was April night. I thought of my sweetheart, riding, and wondered if he were writing to me. (566)

Appropriately, the story ends with Dicey re-creating connection with her fiancé, for the reclamation of her relationship with Great-uncle Felix has nourished her capacity for further connection. This same relationship can

encourage Dicey's independence as well, and for Welty there is no contradiction in independence flourishing within relation. Dicey's relationship with Great-uncle Felix also enables her to see the multiple identities he can contain, deconstructing her tendency to rigidly define and opening her not only to his otherness, but allowing her to see otherness within herself: stranger and native, wild and civil.

Relationship has a similar capacity for largesse in several other Welty stories. Ellie Morgan of "The Key" defeats her own yearnings for a less restricted self when she closes herself to the stranger's interest in her and when she depends exclusively upon her marriage to provide her with fuller possibilities. This latter effort is particularly doomed, since her husband's emphasis on singularity is antithetical to her need for an ever-expanding self through increasing connection and voice. All four of the stories which end this chapter also engage relationship as one means of expanding the self, of giving expression to multiple possibilities for identity, and of encouraging a fluidity of identity: a non-restricted growth from one stage or form of identity to another. The success of relationship in these stories is almost certainly due to the fact that the protagonists of these stories--"A Piece of News," "Clytie," "Livvie," and "The Winds"--all keep their identities open to these multiple possibilities throughout

the stories. In this they differ from the protagonists of the first three texts discussed, who are unable to enlarge their identities, and from the women of the next three stories, who at first resist multiplicity but within the course of the story expand their identities.

Ruby Fisher of "A Piece of News" uses sexual relationships as a way of enlarging her identity: they supply adventure and give vent to her desire. Despite her marriage to Clyde, a demanding and unimaginative man, Ruby creatively augments her identity through her sexuality, voice, and imagination. Clytie seeks relationship not only because she delights in the otherness which she encounters, but because in the faces she sees she hopes to add to her own identity and retrieve a self which her family threatens to destroy. Through her relationship with Cash, Livvie's long-suppressed fullness of being is given release; stasis becomes mobility, predictability and regularity become spontaneity, and submerged intensity becomes a joyous expression of subjectivity. In "The Winds," female relationships provide the catalyst for Josie's movement toward mature female identity. Both Cornella, her neighbor, and the lady coronetist she hears perform motivate her self-expansion. During a night of storm, Josie fluidly moves through stages of identity, opens herself to the strangeness of the storm, reconsiders herself as a subject and as an object, and increases her strength of voice.

Ruby Fisher of "A Piece of News" is perhaps Welty's most self-sufficient character of those discussed in this chapter. She delights in all aspects of her self--her physical body, her voice, her imagination--and the pleasure she receives from them is hers alone.

Through language in particular--both the spoken and the written word--Ruby explores and multiplies her identity, entirely for the pleasure which she receives from the exploration. Thus her voice is used quite literally to talk to her self and the enjoyment she receives from the "conversation" is of course intensely personal. "Her little song about the rain, her cries of surprise, had been only a preliminary, only playful pouting with which she amused herself when she was alone. She was pleased with herself now" (12). As her self-satisfaction increases, so does the quantity of her talk. She "began to talk and talk to herself. She grew voluble" (14).

Nowhere is this use of language more apparent than in Ruby's interaction with the newspaper. The newspaper is originally used as a wrapper to protect from the rain a sack of coffee, a gift (or payment) from a travelling coffee salesman with whom Ruby has had sex. Ruby unfolds the wet newspaper and lies down full length upon it before the fire, sensuously stretching and moving her body over the words which are being warmed by the fire. This scene is connected by its imagery to Ruby's sexuality, which is given outlet in

her numerous sexual encounters with travelling salesmen. These trysts, actively sought out by Ruby, are clearly arranged to satisfy her own sexual desire.

When Clyde would make her blue, she would go out onto the road, some car would slow down, and if it had a Tennessee license, the lucky kind, the chances were that she would spend the afternoon in the shed of the empty gin. (Here she rolled her head about on her arms and stretched her legs tiredly behind her, like a cat). [14]

Clearly, Ruby is not content to restrict her sexual pleasure to her relationship with Clyde, her husband, or to allow it to be determined by masculine control, as Louise Westling points out (Welty 67), but seeks to multiply both her enjoyment and the power which she feels she can exert through her sexuality. Imagining Clyde's grief if she were to die, Ruby significantly believes that the withdrawal of her sexuality, the natural consequence of her death, will be a final display of her power and the aspect which will most affect Clyde. "All the time [that he completes the process of her burial] he would be wild, shouting, and all distracted, to think he could never touch her one more time" (15).

According to Patricia Yaeger, Ruby exerts a similar control over the words of the newspaper. Yaeger argues that Ruby's body "decenters" the paper layout beneath her, that she occupies and overlays it (Honey-Mad Women 115) and also points out that the paper, "still wet in places where her body had lain" (Welty 13), is changed in form by the

movements of her body (116). The power of Ruby's identity is evidenced, negatively, in her relationships both with men and to language, by the fact that neither are exploitative to her. Her joy in sex seems almost autoerotic, as though men are incidental to her pleasure. Her happiness in her marriage is independent of Clyde. "She gave him a quick look straight into his eyes. She had not even heard him. She was filled with happiness" (15). Similarly, while reading the words of the paper she guards against an unnamed exploitation, as though she recognizes that her interaction with words is intimate, yet is an intimacy in which she can maintain dignity and control. "What eye in the world did she feel looking in on her? She pulled her dress down tightly and began to spell through a dozen words in the newspaper" (13).

A significant difference between Ruby's sexual relationships and her relationship to language is that the former, while productive, is not reproductive: Ruby has no children as a result of her sexual acts. Her encounter with language, however, is described as a kind of birth experience, as Yaeger also points out (Honey-Mad Women 116). She "squat[s]" (12) on the paper which is wet "where her body had lain" and "watched [the paper], as if it were unpredictable, like a young girl watching a baby" (12-13). Ruby, reading a news item she sees on the page, discovers a

new identity for herself which, like a baby, is both self and other.

Michael Kreyling's analysis of Nathalie Sarraute's response to writing is also revealing when applied to this scene. Kreyling argues that Sarraute's decision to write was an act of reproduction, a seizing of the control of words to beget a text, a privilege usually accorded to men. "Words," Kreyling writes, "are the instruments of rebellion, the properties of self-creating acts" (633).

The news item which so shocks and delights Ruby is one which reads "'Mrs. Ruby Fisher had the misfortune to be shot in the leg by her husband this week'" (13). Through her reading and re-reading of these words, tracing the letters with her fingers, experimenting with the effect of the words as they are mouthed silently and voiced aloud, Ruby gives life to another identity for herself: she is the Ruby Fisher of the article and the unwounded Ruby Fisher we see her to be. That she delights in this possibility is hinted at by the fact that she skips over the word "misfortune," pronouncing it last and separate from the rest of the sentence; the "conversation" created by these multiple readings is communication between her two identities, identities which Ruby obviously believes can coexist.

As she passed from one word to the next she only whispered; she left the long word, 'misfortune,' until the last, and came back to it, then she said it all over out loud, like conversation. 'That's me,' she said softly, with deference, very formally. (13)

Ruby here is not fully aware of what Kreyling calls "the intersecting state of self, word, and world" (631), for she has no immediate realization that a word which names her can also name another or that a world with another Ruby Fisher exists outside her own. Yet Ruby's act is still radically creative and self-expansive. For through words that are neither new nor composed by her, Ruby can nevertheless create a new identity for herself. The "presumed object, the Other," in other words, can "[deflect] 'alterity' and [seize] the privilege of the subject" (Kreyling 633). Ruby's ability to be a self-creating subject does, as Kreyling suggests (632), give her an autonomy and a sense of separateness from others--in particular from Clyde, her husband.

This interpretation runs almost entirely counter to that given by Peter Schmidt, who contends that Ruby gives texts "unlimited authority over her life." Emphasizing the manner in which she says "'That's me,'" Schmidt argues that "[t]exts and the complex tasks required to decipher them are clearly associated in Ruby's mind with her husband's ability to define her responsibilities as a vigilant mother and properly deferential wife" (35). Yet Ruby does not seem restricted and defined by the text, but able to make it say more than it was intended to, to make it a part of her and separate, to let it increase her identity, not limit it. Later, Schmidt seems to revise his own text, admitting that

Ruby alters the piece of news, though she keeps its meanings silent (37).

As if to punctuate this act of self-creation, a multiplicity of sounds, most of which are used to describe aspects of Ruby's identity, follow Ruby's assertion. "The fire slipped and suddenly roared in the house already deafening with the rain which beat upon the roof and hung full of lightning and thunder outside" (13). The fire, which suffuses both Ruby and the paper with its warmth and which is at a later point referred to as a "mirror . . . into which she could look deeper and deeper" (13), blends its voice with the sound of the rain which had earlier drenched Ruby. It is perhaps worth mentioning that in "Old Mr. Marblehall," another work by Welty, the comment is made that "Southern women despise above everything" to go out in the rain (92), suggesting that Ruby (as well as Mrs. Larkin and Clytie) does not define herself through southern convention. Finally, the flash of the lightning is thrilling to her in exactly the same way as are the words of the newspaper: both expand her sense of identity. To her the lightning represents power and fullness, as when "a whole tree of lightning stood in the sky" (15); lightning is explicitly associated with Ruby when her movement is described as "quicker than lightning" (15). Not coincidentally, Clyde is "mortally afraid of lightning like

this" (14), a comment which perhaps also suggests that he fears Ruby's strength of identity, her personal force.

Ruby also seems to associate the force of lightning with her own power of self-creation through language. Having already created for herself a plural identity through her internalization of the words in the paper, Ruby now attempts to use language to alter and control reality. Immediately after the explosion of sound described above, Ruby runs to the door, screaming Clyde's name. As she opens the door, a bolt of lightning illuminates the sky, and it is unclear whether it is the lightning flash or her pronunciation of Clyde's name which she believes might "bring him in, a gun leveled in his hand" (13), Ruby's imaginative fulfillment of the news item, which of course describes "her" as wounded. In either case, Clyde probably feels he must defend himself both against lightning's force and the power of Ruby's words. Later, Ruby tries the power of language still further, when she wonders "out loud how it would be if Clyde shot her in the leg" (14--emphasis mine), expanding and elaborating the story until she imagines herself dying--beautifully and tragically--of a shot in the heart. Her death, however, does not come until she has had the final word to Clyde, nor, as was shown previously, does her power diminish with her death: "the pity and beauty and power of her death" (15) joins with the fire in warming her.

Ironically, Ruby's imaginative story is prophetic in a way completely opposite to her intentions. Ruby uses language here creatively and imaginatively, as a way of composing multiple possibilities for herself and as a way of involving both her "identities." The story she creates, however--of being shot through the heart by Clyde--foreshadows his actual role in silencing her voice and diminishing, if not entirely destroying, her multiplicity of identity and the pleasure it brings her. Earlier, it is the spelling and the forming of words which "stir[s] her heart" (13), and now it is Clyde who stills that heart.

In contrast to the light and power which is associated with Ruby through fire and lightning, Clyde is--appropriately--associated with darkness. He enters with "dark streams" of water dripping from his black hair and his body casting a "long shadow" over the room, darkened now by the dying fire. The tone of his voice, the sounds of his movements, all resemble thunder--much noise, but lacking real power. He "growl[s]," "stamps," "make[s] a little tumult," "grumble[s]," and "[cries] explosively" (15, 16), but his face is "blank and bold" (16--emphasis mine). Yet inexplicably, though the threat Clyde poses to Ruby seems empty and benign, his strength of identity unequal to hers, still Ruby allows Clyde to be her destroyer. For a time, Ruby is able to "[draw] herself in . . . [face] him straightened and hard" (16), guarding her identity against

destruction. However, when Clyde burns Ruby's newspaper and dismisses with terse logic Ruby's desire to embrace the otherness of the Ruby Fisher of the paper, Ruby's loss is initiated.'

'Look,' said Clyde suddenly. 'It's a Tennessee paper. See "Tennessee"? That wasn't none of you it wrote about.' . . . 'It was Ruby Fisher!' cried Ruby. 'My name is Ruby Fisher!' she declared passionately to Clyde. (16)

When Clyde tells Ruby that there is more than one Ruby Fisher, he is, of course, also reiterating the importance of his name to her identity; Ruby is not unique, for she shares his name. This, according to Peter Schmidt, is Ruby's "news" (33).

Left now with only a singularity of identity, Ruby can no longer shine like a multi-faceted gem in the light. All around her is darkness and silence, and the bridge Ruby crosses in imagination is clearly not a positive transition. "She stood stooping by the window until everything, outside and in, was quieted before she went to her supper. It was dark and vague outside. The storm had rolled away to faintness like a wagon crossing a bridge" (16).

Whereas Ruby's identity undergoes a transition from an animated multiplicity to a state of repression, if not of subdued singularity, the process is nearly reversed in "Clytie." Clytie struggles from the beginning to maintain the life and reality of a multiple identity which is slipping away from her and in the end retrieves it. It

could be argued that because Clytie's efforts to draw this other identity into her self are largely unsuccessful throughout most of the story, no claims can be made for the multiplicity of her identity. More important here, however, are the desire which motivates her and her refusal to abandon an identity which she knows in some way is still a very real part of her. As Albert J. Griffith points out, it is "only through faithfulness to a vision of one's own identity that one can escape from the madness of an anachronistic way of life" (81). Because Clytie attempts, in this struggle to maintain a vision of her self, to move from "introspection to activity," to not make her search a wholly inward one, "Clytie" can be considered a revision of the conventional female developmental pattern as presented in literature (Abel et al. 13).

Clytie describes the identity with which she struggles to sustain connection.

And now it was hard to remember the way it looked, or the time when she had seen it first. It must have been when she was young. Yes, in a sort of arbor, hadn't she laughed, leaned forward . . . and that vision of a face--which was a little like all the other faces [of those she encounters] . . .--and yet different, yet far more--this face had been very close to hers, almost familiar, almost accessible. (86)

This identity is described as the same as, yet different, from her present self and from those whom she sees daily; as more than her self yet equal to it; as in some ways close, yet also very remote. It is, in other words, an expansive

identity which can encompass contradictions, be same and other, and exist alongside her present identity, offering her a fuller range of possibility. Although this identity is remembered from the past, it is not confined to it, as Clytie's persistent search to reclaim it attests.

"It was purely for a resemblance to a vision that she examined the secret, mysterious, unrepeated faces she met in the street of Farr's Gin" (86). Clytie's description of these faces as infinite, vast, and ever-new, in contrast to the community's factual and diminishing reportage of the town's population, underlines her desire for a limitless and mutable multiplicity of identity.

Anyone could have told you that there were not more than 150 people in Farr's Gin, 'counting Negroes.' Yet the number of faces seemed to Clytie almost infinite. She knew now to look slowly and carefully at a face; she was convinced that it was impossible to see it all at once. The first thing she discovered about a face was always that she had never seen it before. When she began to look at people's actual countenances there was no more familiarity in the world for her. The most profound, the most moving sight in the whole world must be a face. Was it possible to comprehend the eyes and the mouths of other people, which concealed she knew not what, and secretly asked for still another unknown thing? (83--emphases mine)

As the faces she examines remain in some ways secret and mysterious to her, so she is towards her own identity "near sighted" (81)--she cannot see Farr. And yet she sees farther than anyone around her, for she looks beyond surfaces to catch glimpses of deeper selves to which all others are blind. It is this capacity that prompts Larry

Finger to conclude that only Clytie has a "worthwhile life of the mind" (51). For example, the citizens of Farr's Gin consider Mr. Tom Bate's Boy to be nearly stripped of identity. Not only do they barely regard blacks as human, as the qualifier "'counting Negroes'" in the above quotation makes obvious, but his moniker as well robs him of individual identity by giving him the name of his former employer and by denying him access to maturity through his still being called "Boy" even in old age. To them, his face is "as clean-blank as a watermelon seed" (83--emphasis mine): even the simile is stereotypic. Clytie, however, associates him with the exotic and valuable, limitless and shifting as sand. "[B]ut to Clytie, who observed grains of sand in his eyes and in his old yellow lashes, he might have come out of a desert, like an Egyptian" (83).

Although Clytie is preoccupied with faces principally for the access she hopes they may allow her to her other, distanced self, she is also driven by a need for connection with others. Louise Westling acknowledges this desire, and comments that Clytie needs the expansiveness of connection to give range to her self (Welty 69). Through relationship, Clytie can join with an Other and can express elements of her identity--openness, exchange, tender emotion--which have long been denied her. This occurs fleetingly in the opening scene of the story and is replayed later as Clytie lights a

fire in the stove, when the heat of the flames recreates the warmth she experienced in the first encounter.

In the street she had been thinking about the face of a child she had just seen. The child . . . had looked at her with such an open, serene, trusting expression as she passed by! With this small, peaceful face still in her mind, rosy like these flames, like an inspiration which drives all other thoughts away, Clytie had forgotten herself and had been obligated to stand where she was in the middle of the road. But the rain had come down, and someone had shouted at her, and she had not been able to reach the end of her meditations.
(83)

Tragically, the townspeople completely misunderstand this moment, which to Clytie offers the possibility of connection both with another and with her other self. Misinterpreting Clytie's standing in the street merely as evidence that she does not have sense enough to come in out of the rain, they succeed only in fragmenting her thoughts and increasing the distance between her and them. She will, in their estimation, always remain a Farr, remote and snobbish as a member of the town's once-elite family (81) and afar, isolated from them by their own emotional distancing of her.

Yet, ironically, it is not the townspeople who most inhibit her search for self, but her own family. "It was their faces which had come pushing in between, long ago, to hide some face that had looked back at her" (85-86). Instead of providing her with an environment which would encourage a free exploration of her identity, they confine her further. The house in which they live is a metaphor for

Clytie's own restricted and empty identity. The house, though spacious and capable of containing much, is in fact nearly barren, lacking the furniture which could provide comfort and rest. Dark and "airless" (82), because of the unopened windows, the house is closed to anything that exists beyond the confines of its walls. Specifically, it admits neither sun nor rain, both elements which are essential for growth, but which Octavia, Clytie's insane sister, equates with "ruin" (83). Predictably, the house is also closed to people, with the exception of Mr. Bobo, the barber, who comes weekly to shave Clytie's father, thus effectively denying Clytie contact with others. All outsiders are to Octavia "intruders" and their regard "simply some form of prying from without" (84).

Unquestionably, it is Octavia who most restricts her family and who stands as a monument to the stasis and limitation which threaten Clytie. Not coincidentally, then, the first mention of Octavia immediately follows a reference to an actual statue of Hermes, a lifeless, stony representation of a being who never truly existed. Ironically, this mobile, wing-heeled messenger is immobilized in bronze, pointing out Octavia's stasis.

Clytie took a match and advanced to the stair post, where the bronze cast of Hermes was holding up a gas fixture; and at once above this, lighted up, but quite still, like one of the unmovable relics of the house, Octavia stood waiting on the stairs. (82)

It is an appropriate symbol of Octavia's limited range of identity that she remains on a single level of the house (she "never came all the way downstairs for any reason" [83]). It may also be significant in connection with Octavia that the only remaining piece of furniture is an organ, which is now entirely unused and covered with a sheet. Octavia's name brings to mind octaves--in music, a full scale--which on the organ are silenced. There is no truly living organ remaining within Octavia--she is in many ways only a sheet-covered corpse, dead to feeling, connection, or change.

Gerald, Clytie's brother, has also succumbed to a diminishing of identity, though perhaps to not so great a degree as Octavia. Though he still manages to escape to the outside through working in the family store, those trips are more and more infrequent. This passage from inside to outside is replaced by Gerald's literally barricading himself inside his room and dulling the edges of his emotional range with alcohol. Gerald has almost entirely isolated himself from relationality, and seems incapable of understanding the mutuality, the exchange, of relationship. Thus he destroyed the only relationship he ever truly had--his marriage to Rosemary--through his perverse acting out of his need for control.

How had it happened that she had left him so soon? It meant nothing that he had threatened time and again to shoot her, it was nothing at all that he had pointed the gun against her breast. She had not understood. . . . He had only wanted to play

with her. In a way he had wanted to show her that he loved her above life and death. (85)

Ultimately, Gerald's identity is like the napkin which he tears into two pieces (88). His identity is fragmented and his self divided: he is a reasonable, sane shopkeeper, a bereaved lover, a psychotic would-be killer, a polite and conversational brother, and a monastic drunk. His fate almost certainly will follow that of his brother Henry, who shot himself in the head, or of his father, who he is said to resemble (85).

It is without question Mr. Farr whose identity has most deteriorated and whose own decline, perhaps, is indirectly responsible for the rest of the family's distortions of identity. Having suffered several strokes, Mr. Farr is now "paralyzed, blind, and able only to call out in unintelligible sounds and to swallow liquids" (84). The barber describes his face as one which "[makes] no resistance to the razor. His face [doesn't] hold" (89), adding that a corpse's face would be easier to shave. Given the significance accorded to faces in this work, this description is doubly revealing. It portrays a most horrifying state of identity--to be only vacuously alive, unable to respond, exert control, or demonstrate feeling. Clytie, for example, notes that "[i]t was impossible to know what he felt. He looked as though he were really far away, neglected, free. . . ." (84) His identity in a constant state of slippage ("his face [doesn't] hold") and remote

from the world of change and response, Mr. Farr is death-in-life. The slippage of Mr. Farr's face does not, in other words, suggest that he participates in a fluidity of identity, an effortless exchange of selves, but rather implies his inability to express even a singular identity. Likewise, though Clytie would like to imagine him "free" as a result, her own determined search for a distant Farr self suggests that she does not find such disconnection freeing.

Unwilling to succumb to the inertia to which her father and Gerald have fallen victim and refusing the vindictive cruelty which characterizes Octavia, Clytie struggles to strengthen her identity by multiplying it, by repossessing the self which is both Same and Other, by opening her identity to non-restrictive possibilities. She is, for example, the only one of the family who daily escapes the confinement of the Farr house through her excursions to town, which expose her to an outer reality with which the others cannot coexist. Though at first the trips accomplished practical purposes, now they almost exclusively serve to meet her need for a more expansive sense of self. Even when at home, Clytie finds ways to mitigate the enclosure of her home and family. The simple, defiant act of opening windows is a display of her openness to otherness and to the elements which encourage growth. Octavia closes windows against the rain, yet Clytie opens them--she seeks no shelter from the rain, as the opening scene of her

standing in the rain attests--but regards it as a cleansing force, a sort of baptism, as do the birds who seek out puddles to wash in (81). The open windows also admit visions of the multiplicity and connection she seeks for herself. "Far out past the secretly opened window a freight train was crossing the bridge in the sunlight. Some Negroes filed down the road going fishing, and Mr. Tom Bate's Boy, who was going along, turned and looked at her through the window" (87). Both the train and the line of blacks walking down the road are images of connection, yet connection which keeps individuality intact: the cars of the train and the men in the line remain distinct entities. The train moves toward transition as it crosses the bridge, as do the men as they travel nearer the water which throughout the story signifies renewal and growth. It is important that Mr. Tom Bate's Boy turns to look at Clytie through her open window, for this establishes a connection between her and the outside. More essentially, because he looks at her with his sand-grained, "Egyptian" eyes, the possibility for the same sort of vast, exotic inner identity which she had earlier created for Mr. Tom Bate's Boy is transmitted to Clytie.

As is true of most of Welty's female characters, however, the most forceful enunciation of identity comes through the pronunciation of voice. In contrast to her father's "still open mouth" (84) which emits no communication, Clytie uses words as a rebellion against her

family's destructive use of language. Thus when Octavia refuses to allow Clytie to feed their father, thereby denying Clytie connection with him, Clytie retaliates with words, the most forceful rebellion she knows of. "Clytie suddenly began to speak in rapid, bitter words to her sister, the wildest words that came to her head" (84).

A startling example of Clytie's use of language as assertion of identity is her cursing sessions in the vegetable garden. As if deliberately refusing a vegetative state which would allow her no subjectivity or independent identity, Clytie stands alone in the garden, swearing with a gathering ease. First likened to a song, then compared to a "full, light stream" (87), Clytie's cursing releases the dam of her family's restriction and allows her a fluidity of voice, at least momentarily. Though the townspeople conclude that Clytie does this only in imitation of Octavia, who used to curse loudly, as a sign of her control and authority, it is clear that Clytie is not imitating Octavia but is defending herself against oblivion and disregard. Her liquid words allow her uninhibited expression, an escape from the entrapping singularity of her family, which is physically represented in the running which follows her cursing. "[S]he would wander through the gate and out through the town, gradually beginning to move faster, until her long legs gathered a ridiculous, rushing speed" (87). Clytie's running becomes an emblem of Clytie's need to

escape restriction and to reject all barriers to her identity, as well as a sign of her relentless pursuit of the identity she seeks to regain.

Though Clytie persistently resists her family's limiting influence, theirs is a force which is difficult to overcome. One look from Octavia, for example, leaves Clytie speechless (87) or sputtering, "like a small child who has been pushed by the big boys into the water" (84). The same image--water--which is used throughout the story to represent baptismal cleansing, an enabler of growth, and most importantly, a free fluidity of identity, here signifies destruction. Both these possibilities are brought together in the final scene of the story, in which Clytie drowns in a barrel of rain water. The antecedent to this scene, her encounter with Mr. Bobo, perhaps makes the former the more plausible interpretation, though it enriches the story to allow the scene multiple meanings.

Clytie's family's response to Mr. Bobo's weekly presence is arrogant disregard and deliberate silence, essential elements of their withholding. "On this occasion not a word was spoken by anyone" (84). Though Clytie too usually conforms to this practice, on this occasion she allows herself to search Mr. Bobo's face in the same way and for the same purposes that she has searched the faces of other members of the community. Unlike the others, however, Mr. Bobo's face provides her with a mirror, in a house

entirely lacking mirrors, with which to see herself. This scene is explicitly connected with the water barrel scene which immediately follows it, and taken together, the two scenes reveal to Clytie--and reunite her with--the multiple selves which make up her identity.

What first draws Clytie to Mr. Bobo is the fear and desperation which she sees in his face. It is implied that these emotions are not his alone, but ones which characterize Clytie as well. Thus when she reaches to touch him, she is not only sympathizing with him but also demonstrating her desire to achieve connection with herself.

Clytie looked at his small, doubtful face.
What fear raced through his little green eyes!
His pitiful, greedy, small face--how very mournful
it was, like a stray kitten's. What was it that
this greedy little thing was so desperately
needing? . . .

Clytie came up to the barber and stopped. . . .
[S]he put out her hand and with breathtaking
gentleness touched the side of his face. (89)

Clytie's gesture here is repeated in the water barrel scene, and this latter scene clarifies that she sees in Mr. Bobo's face--as in the water--yet another self: the face which she has been trying to recover. This identity offers to her what the rain barrel itself is said to offer. It is "her friend, just in time," which can provide to her a "full[ness]," a plurality of choices, just as the water of the barrel can contain a rich mix of coldness, beauty, delicacy, and darkness. "The rain barrel was full. It bore

a dark, heavy, penetrating fragrance, like ice and flowers and the dew of night" (90).

Of course. It was the face she had been looking for, and from which she had been separated. As if to give a sign, the index finger of a hand lifted to touch the dark cheek.

Clytie leaned closer, as she had leaned down to touch the face of the barber. (90)

Yet between this face and Clytie's is inserted another face. Earlier, in her encounter with Mr. Bobo, she had had a similar intrusive experience. Much as her family's faces "had come pushing in between, long ago, to hide some face that had looked back at her" (86), Mr. Bobo's face, terrifying and close, had blocked Clytie's view of her lost self which she had glimpsed below the surface of his own:

Then both of them uttered a despairing cry. . . . The terrible scent of bay rum, of hair tonic, the horrible moist scratch of an invisible beard, the dense, popping green eyes--what had she got hold of with her hand! She could hardly bear it--the thought of that face. (89)

Now, however, as Clytie peers into the rain barrel, the face which intrudes is Clytie's own. For the second time this day, but for the first time clearly, Clytie receives a vision of what she has become. This identity is also real--just as real as the self with which she has been striving to re-connect, equally as actual as the desperate, lonely self which craves connection with others. Clytie's recognition of the face as her own makes her "completely sick at heart" because she realizes that this identity, created from her own failures and her family's distorting influence, has the

power to annihilate the beautiful face beneath it--the more enriching, capacious identity that is now within her reach. Clytie's struggle, then, is similar to the one Dicey of "Kin" earlier felt within herself--she is both "native" and "stranger" to her self.

It was a wavering, inscrutable face. The brows were drawn together as if in pain. The eyes were large, intent, almost avid, the nose ugly and discolored as if from weeping, the mouth old and closed from any speech. On either side of the head dark hair hung down in a disreputable and wild fashion. Everything about the face frightened and shocked her with its signs of waiting, of suffering.

For the second time that morning, Clytie recoiled, and as she did so, the other recoiled in the same way (90).

The reflection Clytie sees may be a Medusa's head; certainly the image is monstrous, the hair tangled and wild, and even Welty's word choice in having both faces "recoil" is appropriate in this context. Yet if Clytie does see herself in part as a Medusa, it is not a paralyzing vision. Clytie seems closer to Cixous' version of the Medusa, which is, as Joan Coldwell puts it, "an emblem of the woman who sees herself straight" (432). If Clytie cannot laugh at her reflection, still she is not turned to stone but has the power to act, to go deeper than that surface image of herself.

As Clytie stands looking in horror at her reflection, Octavia shrieks from the house, "'Clytie! Clytie! The water! The water!'" (90). Intended by Octavia to bring Clytie back to reality, to remind her to bring the rain

water with which to shave their father, Clytie instead chooses to interpret it as an answer to her dilemma. Leaning further over the barrel, Clytie submerges her head in the water and drowns.

It is, I believe, too reductive to interpret Clytie's act as merely suicidal--her method of escaping her constricting circumstances, her way of denying her horrible recognition of what she has--or can--become. Peter Schmidt, for example, concludes that Clytie ends her struggle by drowning her features in the "featureless" depths of the rain water (184), the face of her vision having been obliterated by her "true" reflection (30).

Both of these are unquestionably factors in Clytie's decision, yet her primary motivation seems to be to recover--not re-cover--the beautiful identity which exists beneath the horrible, distorted surface vision of herself. Clytie's plunge thus becomes a "daring thrust into the unplumbed mysteries of the individual person" (Griffith 81). Likewise, though her reflection reveals Clytie as physically grotesque, her response demonstrates her inner dignity. Larry Finger claims, in fact, that throughout Welty's fiction, the characters who are described as somehow "abnormal" or outwardly grotesque are often those Welty uses to show the true dignity of humanity (166).

In order to separate the face "she had been looking for, and from which she had been separated" (90), Clytie

must look "into the slightly moving water" and must "[lean] closer" to the barrel to see what is not visible on the surface (90--emphasis mine). Then too, when Clytie drowns herself, she pushes her face "into the barrel, under the water, through its glittering surface into the kind, featureless depth, and held it there" (90--emphasis mine). Interestingly, in the passages which mention the face for which Clytie searches (86, 90), no features of that identity are given, no description of its qualities is related--perhaps an indication of its undefinability, or of Welty's reticence to reduce that identity to certain features. By contrast, the "inscrutable face" is minutely described, its features delineated. Thus for Clytie to hold her face in the "featureless depth" of the water is to suggest that Clytie enters the water to retrieve "the face she had been looking for." Thus it is appropriate that when she is found head first in the barrel, her legs are described as "[hanging] apart like a pair of tongs" (90), an instrument of retrieval. Perhaps more to the point, Clytie's determination to add an other, deeper self to her identity is so intense that she gives no thought to appearances, is heedless as to whether her act will leave her in the position of a proper lady, with legs primly together.

Peter Schmidt, basing his argument largely on this upended picture of Clytie, claims that the narratorial voice of the story sides with convention and not with the

rebellious protagonist (11). He refers to this final picture as the narrator's "retribution" upon Clytie for her "solipsism" (30). Such a reading, however, seems dismissive of the sympathetic tone which precedes this scene; further, as my interpretation above makes clear, this scene need not be read as a mockery or a failure, but as a triumph of self over conventional expectations.

In the end, then, as in the beginning, rain water does not signify ruin but enables restoration, growth, and the reclamation of an unrestricted and augmenting identity which Clytie continually sought in the faces of others and which she ultimately finds below the surface of her own reflection.

The reflection that Clytie sees beyond is, of course, the identity mirrored back to Clytie from a ruined southern patriarchal culture. Demanding conformity to its established roles and rules of conduct and expecting silence, submission, and unprotesting acquiescence from its women, this culture rigidly confines and defines. Clytie is only one of Welty's women who resists such restriction and closure, who struggles to multiply her identity beyond the frame imposed upon her. From flinging open the windows of a stifling house to plunging toward a deeper, more fluid sense of her self, Clytie does escape such definition. Mrs. Larkin, though perhaps not so self-consciously, also avoids her prim white house and creates a garden which expresses

her inner turmoil. In the rain, she receives the nourishment which allows her independent growth, increased voice, and the mobility to walk through the newly-parted hedge. Jenny Lockhart also abandons the ancestral home which confined her mother before her in search of a more expansive identity with Billy Floyd. In so doing, she evades her grandfather's patriarchal rule only to fall victim to a social order even more sinister. Josie's journey in "The Winds" is not destructive to her sense of self but developmental; drifting from the safe moorings of her family's home, Josie voyages away from convention and toward the vast openness which characterizes her conception of female identity.

More immediately at hand, however, is Livvie, a twenty-five-year-old black woman who at sixteen married a man much older than herself. Livvie voluntarily submits herself to wifely obedience and conformity to "the law of the [grand]father," yet she never surrenders a sense of self which defies limitation and seeks out change and growth. Livvie maintains an openness which enables an inner spaciousness, a sense of not being limited by circumstances, capacities which prepare her for the arrival of her husband's successor.

There is a certain amount of irony in Livvie's husband being named Solomon. Now weak and aged, a "'little tiny old, old man'" (235), Solomon no longer has the "fan of hair

over his forehead like a king's crown" (231); an invalid, he can now only "rule" from his bed, which has "polished knobs like a throne" (228). Still, he does exert an undeniable control over Livvie, and most of the richness of his power originates not from King Solomon's mines but from his "mine's" of ownership and possessiveness. "Solomon [has] a houseful of furniture" (228), the narrator comments, but the furniture seems merely that, purchased not for its usefulness but as an assertion of his relative wealth and as evidence of his need to possess, to display what is "mine." Indeed, all of Solomon's belongings and property are described as his alone--Livvie has no partnership in his wealth. Livvie's "one possession" is a photograph of a white baby she cared for before her marriage (229), a child that is also not her own.

The arrangement and layout of Solomon's property demonstrate his careful controlling, the structure he requires of all that is his. The story opens with a lengthy description of Solomon's house; even the manner in which it is described reveals a precise ordering. The passage opens and closes with an identical summation: "it was a nice house" (228, 229). The description moves circularly from the front room to the bedroom behind it to the kitchen at the front of the house; the outside of the home is then described, the porch from left to right described as "an even balance" (229). Spreading outward from the porch, even

the yard reflects the meticulous patterning of the rest of the home, with its surface, bare of grass, swept in circular patterns.

Interestingly, the number three figures prominently into the scheme of Solomon's order. There are three rooms to his house, three pieces each of kitchen and bedroom furniture. In the front room there is a three-legged table on which is placed a three-footed lamp. Rose bushes "[grow] in threes" (229) on both sides of the porch. Three is the Biblical number of God's deity, and its use by Solomon may suggest his appropriation of God's authority for his own household. From another perspective, however, the number three may ironically foreshadow the insertion of Cash into the twoness of Solomon and Livvie's marriage.

The motivation for Solomon's meticulous ordering is quite clearly to establish a strongly structured defense against such outside intrusion, as his bottle trees most graphically illustrate. Solomon hangs colored bottles from the branches of the trees leading up to his house, in the belief that evil spirits will be attracted to the color, enter the bottles, and remain trapped within them. The fact that he does not begin creating his bottle trees until the year he and Livvie marry indicates that the "evil" he guards against is that which could threaten his marriage. Later, when Cash--dressed in a profusion of color--hurls a stone into the bottle trees, the exact nature of the evil Solomon

resists is made explicit, as well as the impossibility of its being protected against (237).

Solomon, however, remains unaware of the futility of his protectiveness until the end. Thus he restricts Livvie to the house which he has built "the way he would make a cage" (237), and to the yard, allowing her to go no further than the chicken coop and the well, both also containers (232). Forbidding her access to the open fields which surround his home or to the field hands who work the crops, Solomon quite obviously wants to convince Livvie that his world is the world. This point is suggested by the quilt made by Solomon's mother in a pattern called "Trip Around the World." It is made in twenty-one colors, exactly the number of miles which separate Solomon's house from Livvie's home town (229, 228). The fact that this is the quilt which Solomon now continually wraps around him as he sleeps may further imply that he alone is the world around which she should revolve.

It first appears that Livvie does exactly that. She scrupulously maintains the order of Solomon's home; cultivates her silence, not her voice, so as not to disturb Solomon's sleeping; and makes of Solomon the baby she can never have with him, thus forfeiting her reproductive possibilities. Yet these are only aspects of a role which Livvie dutifully plays: she "knew she made a nice girl to wait on anybody" (230). The roles, in other words, are not

intrinsic aspects of her identity upon which her self-concept is based. As loyal as she is to Solomon as his wife, Livvie remains separate from his definitions of her. As the imagery of the story makes clear, she is spring while he is winter--the "spring [has] gone out of" Solomon's hair (231). Solomon is death, and Livvie, as her name suggests, is life. Watching Solomon sleeping, Livvie imagines "the rods of the foot of the bed . . . [rising] up like a rail fence between them" (232), and she resists mightily the death which she considers him as representing. "To look at him dreaming of her when he might be going to die frightened her a little, as if he might carry her with him that way, and she wanted to run out of the room" (233). Most importantly, however, Livvie is change, motion, expansiveness, and multiplicity, and Solomon is stasis, limitation, and singularity, as will be shown.

A scene which involves all these contrasts is the account of Livvie's attempted "escape" from Solomon's domain. "Stealing away down the still, deep Trace," Livvie crosses the path, described as a river with its depth of dead leaves, and climbs the bank to an isolated graveyard.

[S]he had found a graveyard without a church, with ribbon-grass growing about the foot of an angel (she had climbed up because she thought she saw angel wings), and in the sun, trees shining like burning flames through the great caterpillar nets which enclosed them. Scarey thistles stood looking like the prophets in the Bible in Solomon's house. Indian paint brushes grew over her head, and the mourning dove made the only sound in the world. Oh, for a stirring of the leaves, and a breaking of the nets! But not by a

ghost, prayed Livvie, jumping down the bank.
(230)

When Livvie married Solomon and left her home, "she had not thought that she could not get back" (228). Thus, Livvie makes the journey out of a desire to go beyond the allowed parameters of Solomon's property. She does in fact cross the boundary designated by the Trace, in search, quite literally, of wings. Yet what she finds enables not the freedom and transformed self signified by the angel, but reinforces the restriction she hoped to escape. The angel is, ironically, a tomb marker and does not fly free of the death surrounding her but has feet entwined with the grass of the grave plot. Even the trees, which rise above the graveyard, are tangled in caterpillar webs, and there is no voice but that of the mourning doves. She lives, for now, in winter--there is no true fluidity in which to immerse herself but only dead leaves, and she rightly recognizes that the Trace is "not like a road that went anywhere" (230).

Yet even within the bleakness of this present vision, there are multiple possibilities for what will be. The angel denotes the reality of life after death--in this case, Solomon's death rather than her own--and the transformation which accompanies that transition. Winter does inevitably lead to spring, and caterpillar webs will be replaced with the wheeling dances of butterflies. Appropriately, it is along this same Trace that Livvie later meets Cash, who

appears to her not as a ghost, but as "a man, looking like a vision" (235), a vision which inspires not prophetic fear as do the "scarey thistles," but brings joy of fulfillment.

Welty's text deals primarily with the coming of that spring and the new and multiple possibilities it brings to Livvie: growth, freedom, productivity, enriching connection. Appropriately, this occurs on the first day of spring, March 21, a date which is Solomon's three multiplied by seven, the number of perfection or completion. The day is heralded by the song of frogs in the night preceding, "like a commotion in the room" (231). Predictably, their multitudinous voices do not stir Solomon, who goes on in his single existence of sleep, but they stimulate Livvie all night with their chorus of language. Interestingly, Livvie assumes that if Solomon could hear them, he would be bothered by their voices, just as he would be by the same eruption of multiplicity in Livvie.

Significantly, the excitement of the night intensifies Livvie's hunger, and she eats both her own and Solomon's breakfast (231). Earlier, food is associated with adding something to the self, and the desire for food with the willingness to "taste" more of life.

[H]e would only look at [food] now, as if he were past seeing how he could add anything more to himself. . . . She could not surprise him any more, if he would not taste, and she was afraid that he was never in the world going to taste another thing she brought him--and so how could he last? (230)

Solomon's refusal to eat, therefore, stands for his inability to expand the range of his identity or even to nourish his present identity. Livvie's intense appetite, by contrast, is evidence of her eagerness not only to add to herself, but to multiply her identity by allowing transformations of her self and through that, to grow and "last." It is no wonder, then, that Livvie finds Cash's face "sweet" (237) but that Solomon responds to his presence with "a cough of distaste" (238).

It is with such openness and anticipation that Livvie participates in spring's arrival. "The whole day, and the whole night before, she had felt the stir of spring close to her. It was as present in the house as a young man would be" (231). Besides being a rather blatant foreshadowing of her later connection with Cash, this statement literalizes Livvie's incorporation of spring's fullness into her identity and its intrusion into the dormancy of her situation. Livvie discovers a true expression of this fullness, motion, and plurality in the activities and voice of the field workers and vicariously participates in their vivacity.

[T]hey would all start at once shouting, hollering, cajoling, calling and answering back, running, being leaped on and breaking away, flinging to earth with a shout and lying motionless[.] . . . The little children came too, like a bouncing stream overflowing the fields, and set upon the earth, their little voices almost too high to be heard. (232)

The fluidity of their movement, the reciprocity and exchange of their voices, the eclectic interaction of young, old, male, female, animal, and earth, is an effective metaphor for the internal revitalization Livvie is experiencing. Identifying more and more with this multiplicity and disassociating herself gradually from Solomon's stasis and singularity, Livvie imagines the scene before her as a turning wheel with the "fields, house, and cabins" as the spokes, the encircling road as the rim, and Solomon as the hub, "a little still spot in the middle" (232). Livvie sees Solomon as central to the scene because he owns it, yet she recognizes that he is neither responsible for its motion nor a participant in it, for he is "sound asleep while all this went around him that was his" (232). Whereas their wheel is productive and interactive, mutable and constantly moving, Solomon is a static core of being, as changeless and restricted as the hub of the plow-wheel he has nailed to the wall of his house (229).

Two episodes give further outlet to Livvie's multiplicity of identity. The first, her encounter with Miss Baby Marie, the cosmetic saleswoman, introduces and foreshadows some of the aspects of change which are given fuller expression in the second episode, her meeting with Cash.

Isolated from the rim of roads surrounding her, Livvie is surprised that Miss Baby Marie--her very name suggesting the new beginning possible for Livvie--has been able to "come without a road" (233), her aggressive movement taking her to the very door of Solomon's static center. Miss Baby Marie's determination, however, shows Livvie that even absence of a road need not prohibit movement or access. With this knowledge, even a simple tube of lipstick can be the vehicle for change and freedom from restriction, which is actually the case for Livvie. Amazed by the color and scent of the lipstick, which she compares to chinaberry blossoms, Livvie is imaginatively transported above and beyond her present limitations. "Her hand took the lipstick, and in an instant she was carried away in the air through the spring, and looking down with a half-drowsy smile from a purple cloud she saw from above a chinaberry tree . . . the [childhood] home that she had left" (234). Significantly, she sees from her vantage point her mother, her apron heavy with figs, and her father fishing in a clear pond, the "little clear fishes swimming up to the brim" (234). Both images suggest a fullness available to her which is ripe for the picking, a chance to live life to the brim. The application of the lipstick to her lips gives Livvie access to some of that change, for she feels transformed, both within and without. "It seemed as if her heart beat and her whole face flamed from the pulsing color

of her lips" (235). Predictably, Solomon, unreceptive to change and expansion, does not even notice a change in Livvie. Further, it is he who indirectly makes it impossible for Livvie to possess this small instrument of change, for he keeps the money which would enable Livvie to buy the lipstick (234). Soon, Livvie will have her own Cash who will enable a far more colorful spectrum of self than the lipstick can; now, however, Livvie can "only" offer Miss Baby Marie eggs in payment, her sole source of wealth in Solomon's household. Though the saleswoman refuses to accept them, the eggs--which contain the material of birth and new life--nevertheless symbolize Livvie's own potential and her willingness to use present resources to multiply her possibilities. By contrast, Solomon is intent on preserving and keeping intact a singularity of vision. As he sleeps, he "sigh[s] gently as if not to disturb some whole thing he held round in his mind, like a fresh egg" (232). Because his emphasis is on preserving wholeness and avoiding change, his "shell" will never be broken; new life can never issue forth.

As if the lipstick enables her to move beyond boundaries, Livvie once more moves down the Natchez Trace. It is somewhere along this path, previously obstructed by caterpillar nets and thistles, that Livvie meets Cash, a young man whom she later recognizes as a "transformed field hand" (236) as she is a transformed wife. Dressed in wildly

colorful clothing, Cash resembles the chinaberry tree of Livvie's earlier vision. His "high-up tawny pants" create the trunk of the tree, around which his "leaf-green" coat is spread. His hat, "the color of a plum," matches the color of Livvie's lipstick (described as "'purple'" [234]) and the shade of the cloud which overhangs the chinaberry tree of her vision. Its color and ostentation are in marked contrast to Solomon's rigid black hat, which hangs immovable on a peg on the door. All aspects of his dress, including his "baby pink" shirt, present Cash as a fruitful embodiment of spring's multiplicity--its expansiveness, change, variety, and fullness.

At first separated from Livvie as he stands on the other side of the Trace, Cash in "three jumps, one down and two up" (236) bridges the gap. Here the "threes," which were with Solomon associated with order and predictability, with Cash create connection and describe a fluidity of movement. Cash tells Livvie that he has been to Natchez--which in "At The Landing" is Jenny's mother's "wild desire" (242). "'I taken a trip, I ready for Easter!'" he asserts, and truly the world around him seems resurrected by his revitalizing presence. "They walked through the still leaves of the Natchez Trace, the light and the shade falling through trees about them, the white irises shining like candles on the banks and the new ferns shining like green stars up in the oak branches" (236).

To Livvie, Cash's transforming power is both frightening and beautiful. Hence, her "eyes grow bright" at Cash's ability to "[kick] the flowers as if he could break through everything in the way and destroy anything in the world" (236), including the things that serve as barriers to her. Yet she is "chill[ed]" by the "abandon and menace . . . in his laugh" and the powerful flailing of his hand, which seems "as if Cash was bringing that strong hand down to beat a drum or to rain blows upon a man" (236). Ultimately, however, it is Cash's beauty which proves irresistible, and it is Livvie who takes the initiative in creating a connection with him. "She gathered the folds of his coat behind him and fastened her red lips to his mouth, and she was dazzled at herself then, the way he had been dazzled at himself to begin with" (236). Her act seems autoerotic, for she is "dazzled at herself." The pleasure she feels in the self she is becoming, in other words, is not received from Cash but comes from within herself. It is as if she is fascinated with the emerging newness of her being, the different selves she can be.

Thus it is erroneous to assume that Cash is essential to Livvie in reviving in her a fullness of identity. As has been previously shown, Livvie preserved a range to her identity that went beyond Solomon's established boundaries and maintained a sense of herself as separate and open to fluctuation and transformation even while subjected to

Solomon's singularity and restriction. By gradually allowing herself to express different aspects of her identity, Livvie strengthens her own subjectivity and autonomy. At the end of the story, the three characters converge in Solomon's bedroom, and Livvie's posture reflects her separateness and individuality. "[W]ith her arms stiff at her sides she stood above the prone old man and the panting young one, erect and apart" (238). Though Livvie wants Cash, and though his strength complements her own, still she possesses a power which comes from within and is independent of Cash's relation to her. "She stood up and held up her head. Cash was so powerful that his presence gave her strength even when she did not need any" (237--emphasis mine).

The final scene of the story masterfully and subtly re-constructs the wheel image previously used to describe Solomon's static core of identity and connects it with another recurring image, time. Now, however, the center is no longer the singular Solomon, but the enjoined couple; no longer static, but revolving; and now Livvie touches all that surrounds her and even spins out of orbit to encompass still more.

Throughout the text, Solomon is associated with the passage of time. He has two calendars on the wall of his bedroom (229) and continually holds a silver watch. "He would sleep with the watch in his palm, and even holding it

to his cheek like a child that loves a plaything" (232).

The watch's steady, predictable ticking comes to represent the regimented precision of Solomon's identity. Solomon's preoccupation with time lies not with what time remains to him but with the measured quantity which he has used.

"[E]ven through his sleep he kept track of [time] like a clock, and knew how much of it went by" (232). When Solomon therefore offers Livvie his watch just before he dies, he wills to her a tendency to look backwards, not forward, and passes on to her the only perspective of which he can conceive: the order and regulation which have measured his existence, shaped his identity, and, of course, influenced Livvie's existence as well.

Still connected in this small but significant way to a past which has restricted her, Livvie carries the watch into the front room. There Cash begins to spin Livvie in a circle around his own revolving body, his own motion a strong contrast to Solomon's earlier description as "a little still spot in the middle" (232). Livvie at first keeps "one arm and its hand stiff and still, the one that held Solomon's watch" (239), extended like a spoke which keeps her restricted to the range of an invisible, but very real, rim. Her extended arm also resembles the hand of a clock, unable to move forward. Eventually, however, Livvie releases the watch and it spins out of the orbit created by their revolutions. "Then the fingers softly let go, all of

her was limp, and the watch fell somewhere on the floor" (239). Only when Livvie is able to release her hold on the past does she achieve the full range of her possibility. The ticking of the watch and her earlier "melody" of sobs is replaced with the "full song of a bird" outside the confines of the house; their circular dance loops unobstructed around the room and "into the brightness of the open door" (239).

Though Peter Schmidt acknowledges the expansiveness and freedom suggested by the open door, he nevertheless is skeptical about Livvie's future with Cash. Using what he admits are marginal details, such as Cash's coat opening "like doors," Schmidt claims that Cash may also be inhibiting to Livvie (26). Yet Livvie's strength is subtly emphasized in the story's final paragraphs. It is she who leads the way out of Solomon's room, with Cash a silent shadow (though a shadow with "spangles") following her; his arms "tremble," while she rests in satisfaction within them; and she, the story suggests, can participate in the freedom of the cardinals "flying and criss-crossing" while also enjoying their productivity: she is like "a bird on a nest" (239). Relationship with Cash does not deplete her independent wealth, but enriches it.

"The Winds" is the final story to be discussed in this chapter. Welty uses a night of storm as the backdrop for Josie's initiation into adult female identity. The transformation, of course, does not occur overnight, though

the transition very nearly does. Josie identifies with Cornella, the older girl who lives in the double house across the street, and looks to her as a model of female identity. Ironically, however, by the end of the story Josie possesses a less restricted range of identity than does Cornella and is perhaps more advanced in an adult female identity than is Cornella, for whom the transition is not accomplished.

This irony occurs for several reasons. First, though Josie is younger and more immersed in childhood experience than is Cornella, she already has a budding multiplicity--a willingness to incorporate a vastness within her, to experience a greater variety of life, as Cornella is not. In addition, Josie's circumstances, in some respects, are not as prohibitive as Cornella's, though Josie seems to believe otherwise. Finally, Josie is herself not so restrictive in particularizing female identity; the attainment of a mature female identity for Cornella seems contingent on a relationship with a man. Josie regards it as an inwardly-felt sense of self.

Throughout her text, Welty weaves several images that reflect Josie's openness to a shifting fluidity, an unrestricted range, and a variable pattern of identity. Most central is her use of the equinoctial wind storm to suggest the convolutions within Josie, her being between "seasons" of identity. The sea, long associated with the

infinite and expansive and often regarded as female in its cycles of tides and its womb-like envelopment, is another image of multiplicity and female maturation. Equally as feminized is the moon, its phases suggesting and influencing female cycles and those of the sea. Finally, Welty uses music as another representation of multiplicity, its octave of notes capable of endless variation. At many points, these images converge, interact with one another, construct and de-construct one another, creating their own multiplicity through their endless combination.

Though Josie's age is not given, she is clearly younger than Cornella, who is one of the "big girls" (209). Her interests and activities suggest that Josie is in early adolescence, perhaps eleven or twelve years old. She is young enough to be immersed in childhood play and imagination and to accept and live a childish existence with heedless absorption, yet old enough to be ready, by the end of summer, for transition. All of childhood for Josie is signified by summer and its freedom and infinity. As Carol Manning notes, girls in Welty's fiction are seldom bound to the home--it is the world outside which interests them and certainly Josie, with her endless neighborhood explorations, exemplifies this type ("Little Girls and Sidewalks" 68). Thus, early in the summer, she can spend all day making clover chains and flower necklaces, sucking the sweetness from honeysuckle and pomegranates, reveling in what the

world has to offer her. What awareness there is in Josie of the transience of time is converted into imaginative play, play which she can control through a good luck touch and a backing away from the stone dragon who "begged to swallow the day . . . loved to eat the summer" (216). In other words, Josie has no sense of valuing childhood beyond the immediate pleasure it affords; there is no urge for preservation, no urge to add it to her identity, to be lastingly influenced by this stage of life. While Josie adorns herself with flowers--even wastefully--the older girls press flowers in books and fill cans with four-leaf clovers. The more mature comprehension of childhood as a fleeting stage, to be valued beyond the immediate moment, does not come to Josie until later in the summer as she watches childhood turn into the past.

For a time, though, Josie is content in her childhood, secure in the surroundings which seem an inextricable part of her, as is evident in her attitude toward her home. "She ran and jumped, secure that the house was theirs and identical with them--the pale smooth house seeming not to yield to any happening, with the dreamlike arch of the roof over the entrance like the curve of their upper lips" (213). That she would describe the house's immutability using images of the body is, of course, ironic, for Josie's body will soon undergo dramatic change. As Josie imagines the house as indestructible, so does she want to see herself as

almost deathless, her years stretching beyond her comprehension of time. Thus she accepts with ease their black maid's prediction that she will live to be "'Ninety-eight,'" for in early summer, life is as bottomless as the sea described in Johanna's song, "'Dere's a Hole in de Bottom of de Sea'" (212).

Yet childhood is in fact a limited sea, no larger in some ways than the horse trough in which Josie and her friend float their magnolia leaf boats, their control over that childhood as weak as the wind and waves their breath makes for the boats (215). As the summer draws closer to its end, taking her childhood with it, Josie becomes more aware of this reality and is more willing to move beyond childhood in a search for an identity which she envisions as unbounded and full. The transfer-tattoos of her childhood hint of this voyage, for they are pictures of "a windmill, Columbus's ships, ruins of Athens" (213), places foreign and unknown, accessible only by sea, indicative of the broader range of identity she travels toward.

Some of Josie's summer play reflects her readiness for an as yet incomprehensible transition. Her sand castle ritual, for example, reveals her desire for a voice which has the power to transform and also subtly suggests her hope for relationality. After building a castle--which always requires all of the sand in the pile--Josie puts her mouth to the door of the mound and whispers as a suitor to a queen

within: "'I am thine eternally, my Queen, and will serve thee always and I will be enchanted with thy love forever'" (212). Josie here experiments with both gender roles, imagining herself as Queen as well as suitor, giving herself a fluidity of identity. Importantly, however, Josie seems to prefer the more mobile and subjective role as suitor, perhaps implying that she sees the Queen as trapped inside the castle, as she will not be. Josie's idealization of relationship shows the privileged status she accords to it. Voice is also given a privileged position. The suitor's wish is to have the ability to interpret the speech of birds, demonstrating Josie's belief in the power of language and its expression. It can, as she realizes when she puts her mouth to the castle door, "stir the grains of sand within" (212), hinting that voice can stir up multiple possibilities for the self.

Even more suggestive of Josie's search for a plural female identity is her catching of insects. At one point in the story, Josie declares that "[e]ven a June-bug, if he were caught and released, would turn into a being" (212). Freedom/release enables a mutability of identity, transformation into different selves and ways of being. The statement reflects Josie's belief in and readiness for that transformation in herself. With this in mind, Josie's description of "all that she had caught or meant to catch before the time was gone" (214) takes on added significance.

Importantly, June bugs head the list, directly recalling her expectation of change and transition from bug into being, from girlhood into womanhood. Lightning-bugs follow, suggesting an illumination of the dark and unknown, the new territory of identity she is about to enter. When connected with the lightning of the storm, the fireflies become even more explicitly associated with intensity and change. Butterflies, too, of course, are images of metamorphosis, of renewal and transformation, while bees, the last of Josie's creatures, are symbols of the fertility and productivity awaiting her as a woman. The air of Josie's imagination is alive with these insects, their sound and movement creating an audible and a visual picture of multiplicity which surrounds her now but will not be fully realized within her until a transition is made. "A great tempest of droning and flying seemed to have surrounded her as she ran, and she seemed not to have moved without putting her hand out after something that flew ahead" (214).

To Josie, this living air is what Cornella, her neighbor across the street, breathes and moves amidst. Josie sees Cornella in transition also, yet at a further stage of female identity than she and possessing a fuller sense of multiplicity. In some respects, Josie is accurate in her view of Cornella, yet Josie seems blind to other points which suggest Cornella's restriction and frustration.

Josie regards Cornella as "transformed by age" (213), distant and inaccessible in her maturity.

Called into dinner before she could understand, she felt a conviction: I will never catch up with her. No matter how old I get, I will never catch up with Cornella. She felt that daring and risking everything went for nothing . . . for Cornella, whom she might love, had stamped her foot, and had as good as told her, 'You will never catch up.' (214)

Though she yearns for connection with Cornella, for access to Cornella's more mature state of identity and her difference, Josie in fact further distances Cornella through her own transformation of her into a nearly magical being. Echoes of her sand castle play, for example, are heard in Josie's imagining Cornella as a Rapunzel, creating a private vision which to Josie is a cascade of fullness which flows about her, represented by her hair.

[Her hair] was bright yellow, wonderfully silky and long, and she would bend her neck and toss her hair over her head before her face like a waterfall. And her hair was as constant a force as a waterfall to Josie, under whose eyes alone it fell. Cornella, Cornella, let down thy hair, and the King's son will come climbing up. (214)

What Josie does not seem to recognize is that here, as in her sandcastle play, the admired woman is again enclosed and Josie, as the subjective observer, is again free. Josie does see Cornella's house as depleting and depleted, a container of sadness and pain, yet though she describes the house as a face, she does not view it as a mirror of Cornella's condition.

This worn old house was somehow in disgrace, as if it had been born into it and could not help it.

Josie was sorry, and sorry that it looked like a face . . . It [the house] watched, and by not being what it should have been, the house was inscrutable. (213)

Josie regards Cornella as somehow separate from the dismal circumstances in which she lives, living an existence removed from their touch. Josie claims that Cornella is "not even a daughter in her side of the house, she was only a niece or cousin" (216), thus dissociating Cornella from immediate relationship to the house. She is never observed in the house but "dart[ing] forth from one old screen door" (216). In fact, the act which Josie sees as most characteristic of her, most indicative of her autonomy, her mystery, her ability to defy boundaries, is when Cornella leaves the house to look down the street, a scene which is familiar, "yet . . . like new always" (216).

[L]ightly down the steps, down the walk, Cornella would come, in some kind of secrecy swaying from side to side[.] . . . Then, all alone, Cornella would turn and gaze away down the street, as if she could see far, far away, in a little pantomime of hope and apprehension that would not permit Josie to stir. (216)

In fact, however, Cornella is no magical being, nor is she even a mature woman enjoying the independence and full range of possibilities which elude Josie. Rather, she is an angry and frustrated girl in transition, trying desperately to become a woman in a restrictive and lonely environment. Within this context, the double house is a symbol of Cornella's failed hopes for herself: both are "not . . . what [they] should have been" and both are therefore

"inscrutable" to Josie, beyond her ability to truly know them (213).

Ironically, the scenario of Cornella's walking to the street curb actually reveals more about Cornella's restriction than about her independence and otherness, as Josie interprets it. Cornella walks beyond the boundaries of her yard not in defiance of her family's imposed limits, but because "the strongest fence that could be built" extends to the edge of the curb, obliterating her view of anything beyond the confines of the yard. Josie accentuates Cornella's act of looking beyond the barrier, an act which is a legitimate achievement for Cornella, yet disregards the implications of its presence to begin with. The fence is intended to isolate and to inhibit any movement outward from within, or any "invasive" movement inward as well. Inevitably too, Cornella's gazing "far, far away" is interrupted by a voice which calls her back, and Cornella "would have to turn around and go inside to the old woman" (217--emphasis mine). Josie's response indicates an obscure sympathy for Cornella yet also reflects her childish ease in putting Cornella's concerns aside. "Then for Josie the sun on her bangs stung, and the pity for ribbons drove her to a wild capering that would end in a tumble" (217).

Similarly, Josie misses the full significance of the always-empty street, the absence of an object of Cornella's hopeful gaze. By Josie's watching Cornella's unfulfilled

ritual, in fact, Cornella is stripped of the subjectivity she seeks, the ability to be the gazer, and instead becomes the object of Josie's gaze.

So intense is Cornella's desire to produce an object through her gaze that when she is sheathed within the fall of her hair, which is "a force as a waterfall" to Josie, a fullness Josie feels she need not look beyond, still Cornella looks outwards to nothing. "But always through the hiding hair she would be looking out, steadily out, over the street" (214). Though Josie, "who followed her gaze, felt the emptiness of their street too" (214), she is moved only by its general look of sadness and cannot comprehend what the emptiness communicates to Cornella: her lack of opportunity, relationship, and personal fulfillment.

Thus, Josie has a partial and vague awareness that Cornella is also in a state of transition, desiring the relationality and subjectivity which accompany possession of adult female identity, yet denied access to its full range. Still, Josie recognizes that Cornella is further along in the transition than is she herself; she looks up to Cornella as a model of what she will become when her own transition is complete and envisions Cornella whenever she becomes insecure about the changes she is facing. Josie "invoke[s]" Cornella by repeating her name: "Thy name is Corn, and thou art like the ripe corn, beautiful Cornella. And before long the figure of Cornella would be sure to appear" (216). Her

invocation of Cornella makes clear that Josie would prefer to regard her as a goddess of corn rather than a wandering stranger, lost in the "alien corn."

Josie's transition into adult female identity and participation in the expansive possibilities which this identity enables come during an equinoctial wind storm. Told by her father that the storm marks the seasonal shift from summer to autumn, Josie intuitively recognizes that it also signals summer's relegation to the past (211) and her own movement from childhood into womanhood.

Importantly, Josie has no fear of the storm, but expresses joy and excitement in it. Wakened from sleep, her first interpretation of the storm's noise and movement is that these are the sounds of the older boys and girls going on a hay-ride, and she yearns to be invited along. "Choruses and cries of what she did not question to be joy came stealing through the air. . . . An excitement touched her and she could see in her imagination the leaning wagon coming . . . (209--emphasis mine). So eagerly does she seek transition that it is not the closeness of the storm but its distance which grieves her. "Then the chorus of wildness and delight seemed to come almost into their street, though still it held its distance, exactly like the wandering wagon filled with the big girls and boys at night" (210).

Predictably, Josie's parents are not as eager for her to abandon childhood and resist her entry into adulthood.

Not only do they wake Josie and her brother Will to move them from the upstairs sleeping porch to the safer confinement of the downstairs rooms, but when Josie runs to the front window, exposing herself to the "strange fluid lightning which she now noticed for the first time to be filling the air, violet and rose" (211) and positioning herself only a pane's-width away from the fullness of the storm, both parents call her back to the protection of their arms. Josie's father cautions her with a comment about "'a man's little girl [who] was blown away from him into a haystack out in a field'" (211). Her father's anecdote emphasizes her littleness, the necessary protection of a father, and his possession of her. Significantly, the girl of his story is blown into a haystack, a hint of the potential danger--or at least estrangement--he sees in the hay-rides that now beckon Josie. At a later point in the storm, after she absorbs more of its intensity and change, Josie can begin to draw more on her own strength rather than that of her parents. For now, however, Josie accepts the protection and security they offer as a natural imprint on her identity. "In the equinox Josie stayed with her mother, though the lightning stamped the pattern of her father's dressing gown on the room" (211).

As the night wears on and Josie floats in and out of sleep, the storm intensifies, and its gathering force is compared to a vast sea. Welty's use of this image to convey

Josie's growing receptivity to experiences beyond her world of childhood and her consequent acquisition of a mature female identity is well-chosen. To describe Josie's experience of the storm as a voyage upon the sea is to suggest that Josie is confronted with some of the possibilities of female experience, including female physical cycles, fertility, reproduction, and maternity. In addition, there can hardly be a more fitting symbol than the sea for the broader range of identity Josie moves toward: vast, expansive, all-inclusive, the sea contains unfathomable depths, endless variety, and an incredible array of widely divergent life forms.

Appropriately, the sea imagery in the text is introduced in a children's song, for Josie begins her journey toward female maturation as a child. The song, however, gains richness through its context, for it is the "big" boys and girls whom Josie imagines singing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" (209). Sung as a round, the song involves a chorus of voices with unending cycles of repetition and perhaps hints of her building power of voice and the female cycles she will soon experience. That a child's song is being sung by young adults is also significant, for the fact suggests the process of Josie's transition. Beginning at a stream, Josie's voyage opens out into the fullness of the sea.

Josie's vessel is her house. Earlier associated with the stability of childhood, a structure that would not "yield to any happening" (213), the house now rocks in the small turbulence of her departure from that stable mooring. "The house moved softly like a boat that has been stepped into" (212). The storm stirs the deep within Josie, awakening a long-dormant element of her identity, illuminating an awakening self--the woman within the child's body. "With the pulse of the lightning the wide front window was oftener light than dark, and the persistence of illumination seemed slowly to be waking something that slept longer than Josie had slept, for her trembling body turned under her mother's hand" (212).

As the storm gains force, Josie's driftings into the unconsciousness of sleep become less frequent; she becomes more alert and receptive to the sea which now more intimately surrounds her. "The lightning was flowing like the sea, and the cries [of the wind] were like waves at the door" (217). Now, though her parents still offer a spot of calm in the center of the storm--their "faces were made up of hundreds of very still moments" (217)--Josie consciously drifts away from them, continuing her journey independent of them. "Her mother's hand stretched to her, but Josie broke away. She lay with her face hidden in the pillow" (217). With this break--which is not a rejection of connection but a releasing of her self to a greater expansiveness which

includes but is not limited to family relationship--Josie's musings become more self-exploratory and are characterized by a more mature insight.

For example, when Josie's parents comment that Josie talks in her sleep, Josie receives it as a sort of revelation--an introduction to a different dimension of her self. The sensation, Josie reflects, is

like the time in the picture-show when a little blurred moment of the summer's May Festival had been thrown on the screen and there was herself, ribbon in hand, weaving once in and once out, a burning and abandoned look in the flicker of her face as though no one in the world would ever see her. (217)

The shock and surprise of the moment, of course, is that it is she who sees her face, acting as a subject to view herself as an object, a reversal which brings a sense of "detachment" (217). Josie's description of her own face as "burning and abandoned" is evocative in its strangeness and purposeful vagueness. Burning can suggest an inward fire and illumination, a passionate intensity, yet it also hints at pain. Abandoned may describe desertion, the potential loneliness of Josie's process of maturation, though it also connotes an unrestrained freedom. Josie's facial expression reflects her belief that "no one in the world would ever see her." It is uncertain whether this comment conveys Josie's fear of going unnoticed or her silent joy in possessing a secret self. Perhaps the vagueness is its own explanation, an indication that Josie's

identity will participate in multiple sensations and stages: some painful, some joyous, but all a part of her flickering montage of self. The "flicker" of her face and her inward and outward turns hint of the many lights in which she can be seen, the varying turns her identity can take.

It is also revealing that she sees this summer event as only "a little blurred moment." For as "their house was taken to the very breast of the storm" (218), Josie is thrust past childhood into a vision of her future, and at that moment she sees childhood as fleeting, its richness and experience used and enjoyed, yet not preserved, not drawn into her self as deeply as it should have been. "If they would bring the time around once more, she would lose nothing that was given, she would hoard the nuts like a squirrel" (219--emphasis mine). Since Josie views her future as "herself bringing presents, the season of gifts" (219), her motive in drawing these experiences into her self seems to be so that she will later have more to give, emphasizing the relational quality of her identity growth. In the eye of the storm, Josie sees that each experience, if preserved, multiplies identity, adds to the self, and becomes more beautiful as it is extended outward as a gift--a giving of the self that is not depleting but enriching.

Was each wonder original and alone like the falling star, and when it fell did it bury itself beyond where you hunted it? Should she hope to see it snow twice, and the teacher running again to open the window, to hold out her black cape to catch it as it came down, and then going up and

down the room quickly, quickly, to show them the snowflakes? . . . (219)

It is a sign of her desire for a "second snow," a second opportunity to take into her self those experiences which are rapidly becoming the past, that Josie "aches" for her winter muff (219). Through her choice of the word aches to describe Josie's desire, however, Welty again subtly suggests that the process of gathering memories is not accomplished without pain. What Jennifer Randisi says about Laurel of The Optimist's Daughter is equally applicable to Josie: she does not contrast her past and her present, her childhood and coming adulthood, but "superimposes" the past upon her future, allowing their coexistence and enriching mingling (246). And, in fact, through her remembering certain childhood experiences, through her re-reading them, she re-collects them and creates a more expansive identity with them.

This process is beautifully expressed in Josie's new knowledge of the moon's roundness. Though this in itself is a revelation, subtly indicating Josie's growing awareness of change, of phases and cycles of being, she is not content to know only this: Josie wants a fullness of understanding, and wants to absorb that fullness into her identity.

But I must find out everything about the moon, Josie thought in the solemnity of evening. The moon and tides. O moon! O tides! I ask thee. I ask thee. Where dost thou rise and fall? As if it were this knowledge which she would allow to enter her heart, for which she had been keeping room, and as if it were the moon, known to be round, that would go floating through her dreams

forever and never leave her, she looked steadily up at the moon. The moon looked down at her, full with all the lonely time to go. (218)

This passage is suggestive of both Josie's female maturation and the plurality of that identity. Since the moon is a feminine image, Josie's desire to know of its tides (connecting it to the sea, another symbol of the feminine) suggests her passage into womanhood with its cycles of ovulation, menstruation, and pregnancy. Secondly, Josie's need to contain all of the moon reflects the expanding range of that identity, her ability to embrace a multiplicity of possibilities, a fullness of what female can be.

That fullness can, and does, include "all the lonely time to go," the long, sometimes painful process of her growth. Yet Welty's language stresses the positive potential available to Josie, and her biographical association of the same moon imagery with her own discovery of the reality and beauty of the word and of language adds a wonderfully affirmative dimension to Josie's own growth. In One Writer's Beginnings, Welty writes:

In my sensory education, I include my physical awareness of the word. Of a certain word, that is; the connection it has with what it stands for. At around age six, perhaps, I was standing by myself in our front yard waiting for supper, just at that hour in a late summer day when the sun is already below the horizon and the risen full moon in the visible sky stops being chalky and begins to take on light. There comes the moment, and I saw it then, when the moon goes from flat to round. For the first time it met my eyes as a globe. The word 'moon' came into my mouth as though fed to me out of a silver spoon. Held in

my mouth the moon became a word. It had the roundness of a Concord grape Grandpa took off his vine and gave me to such out of its skin and swallow whole, in Ohio. (11)

Peter Schmidt, who makes the connection, comments that Josie's invocation of the moon must be read as "being about the muse of language" (151). Certainly her moon musings develop in Josie a capacity for speech, an ability to give expression to previously unformed thoughts.

Above everything in the misty blue dome of the sky was the full white moon. So it is, for a true thing, round, she thought, and where she waited a hand seemed to reach around and take her under the loose-hanging hair, and words in her thoughts came shaped like grapes in her throat. (218)

Not coincidentally, the reminiscence which follows this moon passage is Josie's recollection of the shoebox steamboats she made as a child, for this memory engages both the moon and the sea imagery which Welty uses to describe Josie's acceptance of a multiplicitous female identity. Cut into the sides of every boat are different phases of the moon, windows through which the candle inside shines. At the moment when day turns to night, all the boats in the neighborhood are brought out, the sidewalks become rivers for their voyage, and the street is "a river flowing along between" (218). Under the young moon, steamboats pass, their many-phased moons meeting and moving beyond each other. Moons are multiplied, reflected in the "waters" which spread beneath them, enabling their passage. Ironically, in memory Josie participates in this fluid

exchange, while Cornella stands apart, separated from them by the street which is like "a river flowing along between." Rooted and still, Cornella is compared to a tree which has a singular core of self, in contrast to the multiple and mutable female possibilities associated with Josie through the moon imagery. Cornella's center "would have to be seen into before her heart was bared, so undaunted and so filled with hope" (218). Unfortunately, that baring of Cornella's self is never accomplished, and at the end of the story, her identity is left daunted, not vaunted. Josie, however, having learned from what Carol Manning refers to as the "sidewalk experiences of childhood," can grow beyond this moment, can go to a broader world beyond their present ("Little Girls and Sidewalks" 74-75).

Josie's final childhood memory--both in its order of presentation in the text and in its being her last experience before the storm's onset--is of the concert which she attended the evening of the storm. Josie remembers best a trio of women, whom she regards at first as a single unit: "one smile . . . touched them all at the same instant" and all begin to play at the same moment (219). Playing as a group, with no "wonder original and alone" (219), as Josie earlier described falling stars, the trio's music seems to Josie "sparse and spare" (220). However, when they make "a little transition to another key" and the coronetist steps forward from the group, establishing herself as distinct and

autonomous, the music is transformed, and Josie absorbs its transfiguring power into her self. "If morning-glories had come out of the horn instead of those sounds, Josie would not have felt a more astonished delight. She was pierced with pleasure. . . . Between herself and the lifted cornet there was no barrier" (220).

A sense of the coronetist's individualization is transferred to Josie. When her brother calls her name at the concert, Josie replies, "'That's my name'" (220), an affirmation of her separate self (Manning, "Little Girls and Sidewalks" 72). As Josie looks back into the audience, her parents are "far back," and she is "let free" by their distance (220), stepping forward from her family, yet still a part of that group.

Here too sea imagery is used to emphasize this experience as a passage for Josie and as an opening of her identity to the fullness around her, the Otherness which waits to be explored. The coronetist is described as "braced and looking upward like the figurehead on a Viking ship" and Josie imagines her as having come "from far away, and the long times of the world seemed to be about her" (220). Josie clearly considers the coronetist a guide and her music the passage to a journey of transition that she must make.

Josie listened in mounting care and suspense, as if the performance led in some direction away--as if a destination were being shown her. . . . [I]t seemed to her that a proclamation had been made in the last high note of the lady trumpeteer when her

face had become set in its passion, and that after that there would be no more waiting and no more time left for the one who did not take heed and follow. (220)

Josie is therefore prepared by the coronetist's music for her journey to the open sea, to a fullness and expansiveness of a female identity which is launched by the winds of the storm." That night--the night of the storm-- Josie refuses to close her consciousness to sleep but instead looks out into the night to where "beyond the farthest rim of trees the old cotton-seed mill with its fiery smokestack and its lights forever seemed an inland boat that waited for the return of the sea" (220).

When the storm does come, it appropriately comes as the sound of music, music that Josie associates with Cornella, who also listened to the concert "with her face all wild" (220). "As though the winds were changed back into songs, Josie seemed to hear 'Beautiful Ohio' slowly picked out in the key of C down the hot afternoon. That was Cornella" (215). Only Cornella plays intuitively, by ear; only she plays 'Beautiful Ohio,' a song of a river. The other older girls "practiced forever on one worn little waltz, up and down the street, for they took lessons" (215). Josie's own sheet music seems to beckon her, silently suggesting the beauty, the newness, and the fluidity of the identity she moves toward: "The sheet of music open on the piano had caved in while they slept, and gleamed faintly like a shell in the shimmer and flow of the strange light" (210).

Josie follows that gleaming shell into the storm and allows herself to be blown by the wind to the open sea. Passing a steady stream of her summer experiences, Josie moves towards a mature female identity, an identity shaped and influenced by childhood, but which can now contain far more than that. When the storm breaks and Josie is sent to bed (221), she has not fully arrived at her destination but is without question more receptive to the multiplicity which calls to her. She is, as Carol Manning says, moving "toward a larger world, into a sensitive readiness to receive all knowledge, all experience, that the world offers" ("Little Girls and Sidewalks" 75).

She listened for a time to a tapping that came at her window, like a plea from outside. . . . From whom? She could not know. Cornella, sweet summertime . . . the lady with the horn whose lips were parted? Had they after all asked something of her? There, outside, was all that was wild and beloved and estranged, and all that would beckon and leave her, and all that was beautiful. She wanted to follow, and by some metamorphosis she would take them in--all--every one. (221)

Again, there is in the fullness toward which Josie moves a sense of risk precisely in its fullness. With the "beloved" will also be found the "estranged"; experience will "beckon" yet also "leave her." Josie's strength, however, is shown in her willingness to have something asked of her, her courage in moving toward "some" unknown metamorphosis without any real hesitation.

The journey initiated in Josie, however, is a voyage which still eludes Cornella. The night before, Josie sees--

or imagines she sees--Cornella in the storm, exposed to its possibilities, yet still between seasons, in the equinox.

"'I see Cornella. She's on the outside, Mama, outside in the storm, and she's in the equinox'" (211). The following morning, Josie finds a folded, wet note written by Cornella which has in fact been in the storm, but not carried through to its destination.

It was a folded bit of paper, wet and pale and thin, trembling in the air and clinging to the pedestal of the column, as though this were the residue of some great wave that had rolled upon the rock and then receded for another time. (221--emphasis mine)

Significantly, however, the "message had not been washed away"--Cornella's voice survives and, in fact, is "indelible" (221), suggesting that her determination and desire will eventually allow her passage to the far sea. The words of the note, written to an absent and probably imaginary suitor but as easily addressed to the female identity which for now escapes her, reads, "'O my darling I have waited so long when are you coming for me? Never a day or a night goes by that I do not ask When? When? When?'" (221) . . .

Manning suggests that by the end of the story, Cornella is no longer central to Josie, but only one of several influences which combine to expand Josie's identity ("Little Girls and Sidewalks" 76). However, what Josie does with the letter demonstrates Cornella's continuing centrality to Josie and establishes them as partners on this voyage. By

preserving Cornella's note and storing it in the bag which holds her dancing shoes, Josie adds Cornella's experience and voice to her own, allowing Cornella's otherness to exist within herself. And, like the teacher who spread her cape wide to show her students the snowflakes, Josie's extension of her self to Cornella may one day enable Cornella to dance.

By preserving Cornella's note, Josie keeps Cornella's voice from being lost in the wind and augments her own voice as well. That nearly all of Welty's female protagonists utilize voice as a means of enlarging their identities attests to the power Welty accords to it. Clytie enunciates a self which refuses the silence and docility expected of her when she curses in the garden and confirms her existence as a speaking subject when she speaks wild words to Octavia, resisting her control. Voice creates connection for Ellie in "The Key": her silent language of signs allows her to share an intimacy of communication with her husband which no one else can interpret. A similar need for connection motivates Jenny in "At The Landing." Sara Morton of "The Whistle" desires a more inclusive communication; her dreams of Dexter are filled with multiple voices and sounds, a lively interchange which increases the self and which is a stark contrast to the numb silence of her waking hours.

For both Mrs. Larkin of "A Curtain of Green" and Dicey of "Kin," voice is an essential element of their independent

subjectivity. When Mrs. Larkin's lips part with the touch of the rain and the rain itself is given a voice, a transformation is initiated in her: voice marks the end of her insensateness and signals her emergence as an individual from the undifferentiated chaos of her garden. Dicey possesses a strong sense of voice throughout the story. Her subject is her self, an unending story that defies definition and closure. Ruby of "A Piece of News" also establishes herself as a speaking subject through the exercise of her voice. Ruby literally loves to hear herself talk and can creatively interpret language in a way that moves language beyond the limitations of the word or of the context and multiplies her self.

Multiplicity by its very definition cannot of course be limited to only one expression. Voice is only one empowerment of an unrestricted, fluidly-changing, and receptive self. Without exception, all of Welty's stories discussed here offer to their female protagonists a sense of fullness and expansiveness, a vastness and range for their identities which can multiply their possibilities. In most of the stories, this opportunity for expansiveness is an explicit aspect of female identity. In "A Memory," for example, the young girl is confronted with a vision of female sexuality horrifying to her in its incontainability and in its implication of mutability. It is evidence of her movement towards maturity as a woman, however, that she adds

these experiences to her present conception of self, enlarging her capacity for change. The metaphors which describe Josie's transition from childishness to a more mature female identity ("The Winds") by themselves convey the expanded range of that new identity--streams flowing to an open sea, music erupting from a woman's coronet, the gathering intensity of a storm--all add to Josie's sense of self. Mrs. Larkin ("A Curtain of Green") enlarges her identity when she stops hiding under the protective arms of the pear/pair tree and imagines it falling instead, with a sound like bird wings. The female-shaped fruit is now perhaps more within her grasp; she can be nourished by her femaleness rather than limited by it.

Closely related to expansiveness of identity is fluidity of identity. The latter term particularly emphasizes unrestricted growth and an unhesitating openness to new identities and changing conceptions of self. Thus Clytie eagerly retrieves an identity for herself which survives below a frightening surface, even at the cost of her life. Livvie also continually adds identities to herself: she is a dutiful wife and a married wanderer; a tube of lipstick enables her to see herself as a desirable and desiring woman, and Solomon's death and Cash's arrival enlarge her possibilities to conceivably be a mother, a lover, an autonomous woman enriched and mobilized by relationship. Dicey ("Kin") defines herself first as a

"double first cousin" and a fiancée, then begins to regard herself as perhaps undefinable. Her identity alters and enlarges through her identification with Great-uncle Felix and her great-grandmother. The fluency with which she can move beyond rigid boundaries of self by the end of the story is suggested by her movement into the expanse of the night.

In "Kin" Dicey's fluidity of identity is enabled by her openness to otherness, another expression of multiplicity. By learning not to limit Great-uncle Felix's or her great-grandmother's identities, Dicey learns not to restrict herself. She explores their otherness instead of reducing it as does, for example, her cousin Kate. The young girl of "A Memory" likewise does not annul difference; reality and dream retain their distinctness. Coexisting, one alters the other, multiplying possibilities for her own identity.

To allow the coexistence of what are considered opposites or contradictions is another facet of multiplicity, another means of enlarging the self. The stranger of "The Key" exemplifies the energy and force created by the interplay of contradiction within identity. The stranger's oppositions may be an embodiment of the differences between Ellie and her husband Albert. By his presence and through his intensity, he may be suggesting that both Ellie and Albert can expand their individual identities by allowing their differences to remain. Both

spouses, however, seek to conform the other to his or her own image.

Less frequently, multiplicity is expressed as multiple identities. Jenny ("At The Landing"), for example, imagines herself as many selves lining both sides of the road, "never lifting the same face." Ruby Fisher creates a second Ruby Fisher through her imaginative interpretation of the newspaper article. Clytie never ceases to believe in an identity which exists at a deeper level than the self she appears to be to others. A somewhat different expression of these multiple selves can be found in "The Winds," where Josie sees herself as both subject and object--not parts of a split, but two identities which interact.

Clearly, Welty envisioned for her fictional women multiple possibilities and multiple expressions of female identity. For Welty, female identity is potentially an expansive, non-restricting possibility, not a rigidly defined, limited state of being. Welty's conception is given even fuller expression in the story sequence The Golden Apples. Partially because the women in this collection are developed beyond the frame of a single story and partially because Welty engages the idea of multiplicity in more complicated and intriguing ways, The Golden Apples is Welty's richest expression of multiplicitous identity. These stories, and the issues of female identity they engage, are discussed in the next chapter.

Notes

¹ Prenshaw, Peggy Whitman, ed. Conversations with Eudora Welty. New York: Pocket Books, 1984: 20. Further references to this work will be cited in the text as ConvW.

² In "The Winds"--included with "At The Landing" in Welty's collection The Wide Net--she develops a similar relationship more fully and proliferates feminine connections in her collection The Golden Apples, portraying relationships between Snowdie and Katie, Cassie and Virgie, Nina with Easter, Virgie with her mother. In creating such connections, Welty revises the conventional female bildungsroman by allowing her women to share their growth with other female characters (Abel et al. 12).

³ It is interesting that Welty uses the same imagery of drawing from a well to describe the author's process of finding the right word to express a thought (Manning, Morning Glories 3). The common metaphor may suggest that entering the "other country" may also in her mind be connected with the more effective use of language. Certainly giving voice to language is a quality Jenny admires in both Mag and Billy Floyd.

⁴ Curiously, in Pitavy-Souques' interpretation of this story, she neglects to consider these two preceding quotations, which point to the girl's assimilation of otherness. As a result, she concludes that the girl experiences a kind of death, which is "the only escape from this 'framed' condition." Further, she believes that "the girl's experience is not one of appropriation, as all her preceding ones were, but of disavowal. More important, it is one of intensification, an intensification of the radical otherness of the other, a recognition of the difference, of the unaccountable" ("Blazing Butterfly" 547).

⁵ David Leverenz has commented on the ironic parallel of Mrs. Larkin's choosing an identity-suicide in a garden when it is a tree that has killed her husband.

⁶ St. George Tucker Arnold, Jr., in his interpretation of this story, sees none of the positive transformation which I find in this rain scene. Rather, he views the rain as completing Mrs. Larkin's process of regression, her "psychic return to pre-infancy" ("Psychic Regression" 59). Instead of seeing an awakening of voice and a new determination to move from static memory to the growing and changing present, Arnold looks upon Mrs. Larkin as entering an eternal sleep (60), a state of non-differentiation from the vegetable life around her. Yet to take such a view, I believe, disregards the language and imagery of awakening Welty uses: the "arcade of identity" open to Mrs. Larkin is emphasized

through the changed light, the restoration of rain, and the return of feeling and voice to Mrs. Larkin.

' Strangely, Peter Schmidt writes that both Clyde and Ruby burn the paper, and with this inaccuracy distorts the story's ending and ignores the emotional violence Clyde inflicts upon Ruby through his act. "[T]heir act," Schmidt writes, "suggests not only that they are rejecting violence [such as Ruby imagined in her shooting death scenarios] but also that their tie together has a fire's warmth to it" (34).

" Peter Schmidt makes much of the coronetist's influence, seeing her as a female mentor who shows Josie the possibility of nonconventional roles for women and demonstrates that women can be individual and autonomous. In the metaphors associated with the coronetist--the Viking figurehead and morning glories emerging from her horn--Schmidt reads the possibility of women combining independence and boldness with nurturance and care (148-50).

CHAPTER 5
EUDORA WELTY'S THE GOLDEN APPLES

The collection of short stories that Eudora Welty called The Golden Apples is unquestionably her most unique and enduring collection. Welty repeatedly referred to it as her own favorite, admitting that it was "very close to my heart" (ConvW 214). It differs from her other collections in that it alone has a single, shared setting for all but one of the stories and re-appearing and progressively developed characters who share histories and experiences with other characters in the text. In this sense, The Golden Apples resembles Porter's Miranda stories, though the former portrays an entire community rather than a single family. Still, it is a community which could be considered a sort of extended family: Welty herself comments that "Morgana was a whole town and everybody was sort of like a family itself" (ConvW 247).

Amazingly, given the naturalness with which the stories are related, Welty did not at first plan or recognize the connection between them.

I mostly loved working on the connected stories, finding the way things emerged in my mind and the way one thing led to another; the interconnections of the book fascinated me. . . . Because I didn't begin it as a book of connected stories. I only realized the stories were connected after I was about halfway through the book. Some of the people I invented turned out to be not new

characters but the same ones come upon at other times in their lives. Quite suddenly I realized I was writing about the same people. All their interconnections came to light. (ConvW 46-47)

The way in which Welty wrote the stories reveals the origin of their fullness and fluidity. Welty remarked on her process: "I liked the sort of freedom out of which I wrote that whole book--being able to give everything, unhesitatingly, to what I was trying to say, and not being held back by any kind of fear that I might not be conveying what I meant" (ConvW 319--emphases mine).

Five of the seven stories are told through a woman's perspective and relate the stories of women. The two that do not fit this pattern--"The Whole World Knows" and "Music from Spain"--are not included in this study. These two stories recount episodes in the lives of the MacLain boys, Ran and Eugene, respectively. The latter text seems particularly misplaced in this volume, the sole disruption of the continuity established by the other works; Welty herself admitted to questioning its "proportion" and "placing" in the collection (ConvW 319). It alone is set outside of Morgana, Mississippi and tells the story of Eugene's curious attraction to a Spanish guitarist in San Francisco.

Welty places the individual stories of the collection in chronological order, revealing her characters--particularly Cassie, Miss Eckhart, and Virgie--gradually. In the order of their appearance in the text, the stories

are "Shower of Gold," "June Recital," "Sir Rabbit," "Moon Lake," "The Whole World Knows," "Music from Spain," and "The Wanderers."

I have, however, chosen to organize my study principally by character, though I have also tried to maintain a sense of the chronology whenever possible. Thus, I begin with analyses of Katie Rainey and Snowdie MacLain; both are of the older generation represented in The Golden Apples. Analyses of their identities provide a sense of the background and the heritage that the second generation works within or moves beyond. Though Mrs. Morrison is also of the first generation, I have chosen to discuss her in closer conjunction with her daughter Cassie, since I believe Cassie's own identity is inextricably influenced by her mother's. I follow my analysis of Katie and Snowdie with a consideration of Mattie Will Holifield, who appears only in "Sir Rabbit." Because Mattie Will, like Snowdie, is understood largely by how she responds to King MacLain, this order of analysis seems particularly appropriate.

Explications of "Moon Lake," "June Recital," and "The Wanderers" follow. "Moon Lake" is analyzed before "June Recital," though it chronologically follows it, in order to present "June Recital" and "The Wanderers" as connected stories. In addition, though Jinny Love Stark and Nina Carmichael, two of "Moon Lake"'s protagonists, appear in the latter two stories, their appearances are brief and

peripheral. Easter, who is also introduced in "Moon Lake," is given no further mention beyond this story. Instead, Cassie Morrison, Miss Eckhart, and Virgie are the foci of "June Recital" and "The Wanderers." The order in which I discuss these women reflects my sense of how successful each is in developing a fullness and fluidity of identity.

The Golden Apples contains Welty's fullest and finest expressions of multiplicitous female identity. Both the form of the collection itself and the qualities of the women described within its pages enable its success. Because the stories of The Golden Apples are interconnected, there is greater opportunity for each character's fuller development and more space available for relationships between characters to grow. Of the ten women I discuss in this chapter, only two are confined to a single story: Mattie Will appears only in "Sir Rabbit," and Easter is described only in "Moon Lake." In both these cases, however, the women are crucial to their story's unfolding and are closely delineated. Perhaps not surprisingly, those characters who are given the most narrative space are often the women who emerge as the best examples of Welty's conception of female identity. Virgie Rainey and Miss Eckhart, who are central to the two longest selections in the collection, best embody an unrestricted fullness of identity. Jinny Love, by contrast, who appears in the three longest stories but never

as a central character, is least open to the variety and growth Welty makes available to all her female characters.

Relationships between characters also benefit from the increased scope of The Golden Apples. Crossing generations and nationalities, encompassing families, friendships, and mentors, The Golden Apples contains a community of women who often sustain and enrich each other's identities.

Female identity itself as it is presented in The Golden Apples is richer and more spacious, in many cases, than that presented in Welty's previously-discussed fiction. Most of the women of The Golden Apples from the beginning resist definition and allow their identities a remarkable range and a variety of expressions. None of the women from the first six stories discussed in the previous chapter possess from the beginning a plurality of identity. The first three women--Sara Morton, Ellie Morgan, and Jenny Lockhart--never realize the range that they desire for themselves, while the next three--the unnamed girl of "A Memory," Mrs. Larkin, and Dicey--expand their identities almost unexpectedly, since none of them actively seek out fuller possibilities for themselves.

By contrast, only four of the ten women discussed in this chapter do not from the beginning display a fullness of identity. Jinny Love, who in this chapter serves mostly as a counter-example to the other characters' openness and variety, refuses any experience or relationship that does

not reflect her self/same back to her, thus cutting herself off from otherness, growth, and change. Mrs. Morrison and her daughter Cassie are also limited in their range of identity, but for differing reasons. Mrs. Morrison is fully receptive to the many different aspects of multiplicity, yet her circumstances confine and ultimately destroy her identity. Cassie imposes her own restriction. Though she yearns for the expression and freedom of the identity she sees Virgie and Miss Eckhart as possessing, and though she herself has a strong potential for such expansiveness, Cassie also fears the limitlessness of a multiplicitous identity, fears its lack of boundaries and what she sees as its instability.

Nina is the only woman in The Golden Apples who progresses from a defined and confined sense of herself to a much more fluid, open, and expansive identity. (By contrast, three women in the previous chapter exhibit a similar growth: the girl of "A Memory," Mrs. Larkin, and Dicey.) Like Dicey, Nina is guided in her progress; Easter is Nina's mentor, a guide who does not see herself as a guide, just as Virgie does not know the extent to which she influences Cassie's growth.

I will argue that even Katie Rainey, Snowdie MacLain, and Mattie Will, whom critics often regard as quite firmly limited and defined by convention (this is a particularly common assessment of Snowdie's identity) participate in a

wide range of identity. Mattie Will, though bound by marriage to a life of convention, nevertheless finds temporary escape from that limitation through her sexuality. An uninhibited voice is Katie's most pronounced expression of her wide-ranging identity. Snowdie's spaciousness of identity is more inwardly felt, a private "shower of gold" which sustains and enlarges her self.

Welty opens her collection with this "shower of gold," a brightness which infuses several of her other female protagonists as well. Though it is primarily Snowdie's story, it is told by Katie Rainey, whose "visioning" of Snowdie's story reveals as much about Katie as about Snowdie. In Welty's list of Morgana families which precedes the stories, Snowdie is the first woman's name to appear, undoubtedly due to her connection with King MacLain, who is the mythological figurehead of Morgana. Katie is the last woman mentioned in the main list--a social inferior to Snowdie, but perhaps her truest friend.

Katie is given a first person narration, a privileging of voice allowed no other woman in the collection. It is a strength that Katie herself asserts, claiming the inextricability of her voice from what she does and who she is: "Sure I can churn and talk. My name is Mrs. Rainey" (263). Through telling her stories, Katie preserves the past to add it to her self and to expand her knowledge of her identity and of the world, Andrea Goudie's explanation

of storytelling's function (485). A remark Goudie makes in reference to the men of Welty's "Circe" is equally applicable to Katie: she can, by not limiting her stories to her own, "participate vicariously in a virtually limitless range of human possibility" (485). Katie's voice emerges as spirited, assertive, and perceptive. Though her account is of course influenced by her own identity, Katie nevertheless emerges as a reliable and sympathetic narrator.

"Shower of Gold" describes Snowdie's ways of dealing with a husband who is constantly wandering, sexually unfaithful, and profoundly indifferent to her feelings and opinions. Katie is not an objective storyteller, but intersperses her tale with her own firm assertions and responses. In so doing, she reveals herself as a woman with a strong sense of subjectivity who refuses objectification. For example, it is particularly disquieting to her that Snowdie allows King MacLain to come and go at will, with what appears to her to be a passive resignation to her position as object in their relationship. Remembering a time when MacLain, after a three year absence, asked Snowdie to meet him in the woods, Katie almost incredulously reports that "Snowdie met him without asking 'What for?' which I would want to know of Fate Rainey" (264). And, in truth, it takes far less than abandonment and disloyalty to bring out Katie's boldness and fire: she brandishes a broom at her husband when he merely refuses to answer her questions

(268). In her, however, such a response does not come across as shrewish or even aggressive, but only as evidence of her spirit and irrepressibility. When Katie later wonders at Snowdie's near-nonchalance, the "glow" which remains on her face despite King's behavior, her perplexity stems more from her inability to understand that Snowdie's strength is quieter and more inwardly-expressed than from her insistence that Snowdie respond conventionally, with grief or resentment toward MacLain's abandonment. "I didn't know if I liked the glow. Why didn't she rage or storm a little--to me, anyway, just Mrs. Rainey?" (266) Katie, however, is perceptive enough to recognize Snowdie's response as, to her, an obscure show of strength to which the others of the community are entirely oblivious: "And Snowdie as sweet and gentle as you find them. Of course gentle people aren't the ones you lead best, he had that to find out, so know-all. No, sir, she'll beat him yet, balking" (264).

Though Katie commiserates with Snowdie, defends her, and identifies with her as a woman, there remains within her a distinct and unquestionable fascination with King MacLain. Patricia Yaeger suggests that King is a muse for Katie ("Dialogic Imagination" 566), expanding her own creative power. It is a strength of Welty's collection, Yaeger argues, that "the restrictive myths that the neighborhood women need to fantasize about King lead them paradoxically

to identify with his power" (570). After MacLain meets Snowdie in the woods, Katie vows that she is "going to quit keeping count of King's comings and goings," yet before her sentence ends, she is recounting his newest escapade (265). Katie admits her own contradiction: "Why do I try to figure? Maybe because Fate Rainey ain't got a surprise in him, and proud of it" (265). Katie's admiration of MacLain at many points is unveiled, and hints of her own vicarious participation in his sexuality and freedom. "Can't you just see King MacLain leaning his length against that tree by the light of the moon as you come walking through Morgan's Woods and you hadn't seen him in three years?" (264) Katie's imaginative re-creation of the scene reflects her own desire, as does her description of King as he, at a later visit, stands unnoticed on Snowdie's front porch. "Suppose Snowdie'd took a notion to glance down the hall . . . and seen him, all 'Come-kiss-me' like that. I don't know if she could have seen that good--but I could. I was a fool and didn't look" (271--emphasis mine). And it is Katie who continually associates MacLain with goldenness and a sort of magical distance. MacLain is the source and cause of the "shower of gold" which covers Snowdie as she tells Katie of her pregnancy. "It was like a shower of something had struck her, like she'd been caught out in something bright. It was more than the day" (266). Later, Katie speculates, with obvious enjoyment, that MacLain has been to California.

"Don't ask me why. But I picture him there. I see King in the West, out where it's gold and all that. Everybody to their own visioning" (268).

A connection which literally existed between Katie and King MacLain is revealed only thirty years later, at Katie's funeral. MacLain relates that he gave Katie a swivel chair, Katie's only request when MacLain offered her "'anything your living heart desired'" (444). From this chair Katie would sell her produce, flowers, and handiwork. Though a chair might seem a symbol of stasis and immobility, for Katie it is not. She positions the chair "'spang by the road, as close as she could get'" (444), absorbing the movement and activity which passes before her. Though seated, her feet are not planted: "'And her chair always too big for her, little heels wouldn't touch ground'" (444); though in one place, she can see in all directions: "'I saw her swing her chair round many's the time, to hear me coming down the road or starting out, waving her hand to me'" (444). She is, in some ways, Queen to MacLain's King: he says, "'I set her on a throne!'" (444)

Welty subtly suggests through Katie's connection with MacLain that Katie shares the same expansive, spirited identity that MacLain possesses so fully. Contrasting herself with Snowdie, Katie declares her own unlimited range of vision and experience.

But it didn't seem to me running in and out the way I was, that Snowdie had ever got a real good look at life, maybe. Maybe from the beginning.

Maybe she just doesn't know the extent. Not the kind of look I got, and away back when I was twelve year old or so. Like something was put to my eye. (266)

Katie's maiden name, Mayhew--May hue--further suggests the many hues which comprise her identity, the changing, re-creating, transforming possibilities within her. Spring as Welty's metaphor for a fullness and spaciousness of being is, of course, most fully developed in "Livvie," yet is also apparent in "The Whistle," "A Curtain of Green," "At The Landing," and "Kin." Appropriately, Katie moved away from the communities where the rest of the Mayhews spent their lives--away from Lastingwell and Stockstill, their very names obviously suggestive of stasis and limitation. Katie moves with her husband to Morgana, a name which Welty says she chose because of its association with "Fata Morgana--the illusory shape, the mirage that comes over the sea" (ConvW 98). Her movement from Stockstill to Morgana suggests Katie's association with changing shapes, fluid visions, and the sea, an image which in Welty's works is often used to suggest a wide range of female identity.

One very telling passage which reveals a bit of Katie's range and intensity of self is found in "June Recital." Throughout this text, as in "The Winds," music is used as a gauge of the passion and intensity in different characters' identities. Miss Eckhart and Virgie, both masters of the piano, experience a full range of pleasure and emotion through their playing. Though Katie cannot create her own

music, she nevertheless participates fully in its expressive possibilities through opening herself to all the influences around her, from the music of the recital to her chair.

Miss Katie Rainey would always come early. She trembled with delight, like a performer herself[.] . . . She laughed with pleasure as she grew accustomed to it all, and through the recital she would stay much in evidence, the first to clap when a piece was over, and pleased equally with the music she listened to and the gold chair she sat on. (311--emphasis mine)

Even this fullness is not enough for Katie, however; her comment to Cassie following the recital reveals her very real desire to multiply her pleasure further: "'Oh, but I wish Virgie had a sister!'" (313)

Ironically, perhaps the fullest picture of the range and many dimensions of Katie's identity is in the description of her old age, found in "The Wanderers," the last story of the collection. On the morning of her death, Katie specifically considers her identity as a woman, gathering her life about her to reflect on its character, its stages, its variety, and its direction. Katie imagines her identity as

a simple line down through her own body now, dividing it in half; there should be one in every woman's body--it would need to be the long way, not the cross way--that was too easy--making each of them a side to feel and know, and a side to stop it, to be waited on, finally (430)

Watching her daughter Virgie cut a dress from plaid fabric, Katie is prompted to ponder the pattern of her own identity: its lines, its cuts, its divisions. Knowing that

""[t]here's nothing Virgie Rainey loves better than struggling against a real hard plaid'" (430), Katie seems painfully concerned that her own identity lacks the intricate arrangement of Virgie's self and worries that she has not struggled enough, as has her daughter, against the rigid lines of convention and social expectation or even against the qualities of her identity which may have hindered her growth. Virgie's identity is many-directional, a challenge of connections and separations, yet a beautiful pattern.

Yet Katie's musings reveal Katie's refusal to be defined as a woman by her female body, a refusal to allow an "easy" separation between her thinking and intellectual self and her physical, sexual self--an either/or disconnection signified by the "cross way" line separating her upper from lower body. Instead, she insists on a "long way" division, which allows the full length of her body the ability "to feel and know," the physical as well as the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual given expression. The other side which "stop[s] it" shows that control of her responses and feelings comes from within; Katie will allow no coercive force outside herself limit or "stop" her.

Even in her last moments, Katie does not relent in seeking more fullness for herself.

But she wanted to drop to her knees there where Virgie's plaid spread out like a pretty rug for her. Her last clear feeling as she stood there, holding herself up, was that she wanted to be down

and covered up, in, of all things, Virgie's hard-to-match-up plaid. (430)

Still strong and determined enough to "[hold] herself up," Katie wants the complexity, pattern, and beauty of identity that she senses in her daughter. When after Katie's death the headboard of her bed, "dark and ungiving as an old mirror," casts a shadow over her body "down dark as muscadines, to her . . . waist" (431-emphasis mine), it may seem that Katie in dying has forfeited the color and vigor associated with her living identity and is split into the "incompatible" parts of her earlier imaginings. Yet the imagery which follows this description does not allow for such a reading.

Behind the bed the window was full of cloudy, pressing flowers and leaves in heavy light, like a jar of figs in syrup held up. A humming bird darted, fed, darted. Every day he came. He had a ruby throat. The clock jangled faintly as cymbals struck under water, but did not strike; it couldn't. Yet a torrent of riches seemed to flow over the room, submerging it, loading it with what was over-sweet. (431-32)

The lush, unpruned growth which presses against the pane/pain, the ripe preserved fruit, and the goldenness of the light all convey the richness of Katie's identity which remains even beyond her death. Her fullness of being can not be destroyed even by the blow of death, as suggested by the clock which cannot strike. Instead, a torrent of "water"--nearly always associated in Welty's texts with female power and unrestricted growth--floods the room where

Katie lies; in its depths, the clock creates music instead of tolling a death knell.

The image of the hummingbird is also significant. Earlier, in "June Recital," a hummingbird is used to suggest to Cassie Morrison the unfathomable fullness of life. A tiny mass of contradictions, a fleeting, mysterious presence, a being that is "greedy for every drop" surrounding him, the hummingbird is beyond restriction and out of Cassie's reach.

Her eyes lifted to the window where she saw a thin gray streak go down, like the trail of a match. The humming-bird! She knew him, one that came back every year. She stood and looked down at him. He was a little emerald bobbin, suspended as always before the opening four-o'clocks. Metallic and misty together, tangible and intangible, splendid and fairy-like, the haze of his invisible wings mysterious, like the ring around the moon--had anyone ever tried to catch him? Not she. Let him be suspended there for a moment each year for a hundred years--incredibly thirsty, greedy for every drop in every four-o'clock trumpet in the yard, as though he had them numbered--then dart. (308)

This image is repeated in "The Wanderers," now specifically associated with Katie. In her old age, she is described in terms which recall the hummingbird: her head is "silver-looking," reproducing the bird's metallic appearance, and her movements in the yard mimic those of the bird, her dress forming the flower around which she hovers: "Across and back again, with effort but bobbinlike, had moved Miss Katie, Mrs. Fate Rainey, in her dress the hard blue of a morning-glory" (428). Now, in the moment of her

death, the hummingbird reappears, and its association with beauty, fruitfulness, productivity, sweetness, and water, suggest that Katie somehow continues, even beyond death, to participate in a golden shower of identity which obliterates the dark line of shadow which divides her. This truth is confirmed when Juba, the Rainey's maid, reports that she has seen Katie's ghost and "'her weren't in two pieces'" (455).

Interestingly, "The Hummingbirds" was Welty's original title for "The Wanderers." Its plural form most likely suggests that the image was to be associated with both Katie and her daughter, who are both present in this moment, as well as with Cassie. Given the added fact that the hummingbird is the Jungian symbol of freedom and initiation (McGowan 151), the image used at this point in the story may mark this moment as a turning point for both women. Both are initiated into freer existences--Katie through death, Virgie through her mother's death.

The "torrent of riches" which comprises Katie identity is given further form and substance in her final thoughts before her death. As death approaches, Katie mentally goes over "her list" of the seeds, bulbs, and cuttings she has grown and sold over the years (431). The list gathers an incredible variety of colors and types of flowers, vines, and ferns, plants spanning all seasons. It is fitting that what Katie has spent her life cultivating should at her death be the evidence of her own multiplicity of identity,

her openness to variety, seasons of change, and growth. The connections between these plants and identity are furthered in Virgie's later observations. Noting how the road which passes in front of her mother's house has changed, traveled now by rumbling lumber trucks which one by one carry away the richness of the woods beyond, Virgie remembers her mother's pleasure in life, her willingness to taste its sweetness, and weeps over the loss of that way of life.

"They [the loggers] were not eaters of muscadines, and did not stop to pass words on the season and what grew. And the vines had dried. She wept because they could not tell it right" (435). The mourners who surround Virgie think she is crying for her mother, and in a very real (though different) sense, they are right. As Katie herself puts it in her last coherent thought, she has "more than they guessed" (431). Perhaps it is no coincidence that Virgie enters Katie's room in this scene with a thumb stained green from her sewing scissors, a designation of her ability to carry on her mother's legacy of planting fullness and growth.

Katie's multiplicity is also given expression at the last by her reciting the quilts she has made over the years. "Double Muscadine Hulls, Road to Dublin, Starry Sky, Strange Spider Wed, Hands All Around, Double Wedding Ring. Mama's rich in quilts, child" (431). Without exception, their names reflect the expansiveness, the otherness, the connection, and the fullness which has characterized her

identity. Katie's own creativity has gone into this distinctly feminine art form, and the quilts become a legacy to be handed down to her daughter.

If Katie Rainey is rich in quilts, Snowdie MacLain is equally rich in gilt, and little of her goldenness is distilled from King MacLain, but originates within herself and is refined by his absence rather than his presence. Snowdie's story in "Shower of Gold" is told mostly as it relates to her relationship with MacLain, yet this fact does not diminish the portrayal we receive of her personal subjectivity and autonomy, but intensifies it. Patricia Yaeger, by contrast, concludes that Snowdie is the "ideological extreme of . . . female identity," regarding her as a predictable stock character with no independent identity ("Dialogic Imagination" 569). Snowdie's subjectivity, as was mentioned earlier, is quieter and more inwardly experienced than is Katie's. Yet her persistent independence and unspoken strength through circumstances which would make a "proper" southern lady succumb to the community's gracious pity set Snowdie apart as unknowable and somewhat foreign to the other women of the community.

Snowdie's marriage to MacLain, if not designed as a defiance of expectations, at least functions as rebellion. Because Snowdie is an albino and therefore, according to the community's standards, lacks the conventional female beauty and charm required to secure a husband, "people more or less

expected her to teach school: not marry" (265). Even her own family seems skeptical of her marriageability: "Hudson money built that house, and built it for Snowdie . . . they prayed over that" (263). With her future designated--even arranged--for her (the school officials "overlook" Snowdie's poor eyesight to assure her of a teaching position [265]), Snowdie's decision to marry is not an acquiescence to convention, but a disregard for it. The possibility even exists that Snowdie married MacLain anticipating the independence the relationship would allow her. Though outwardly presenting a demure and even submissive demeanor, Snowdie retains a willful, even stubborn, spirit that rivals MacLain's own, a quality that perhaps only Katie Rainey can recognize in her.

Certainly Snowdie from the beginning delights in the freedom and autonomy her husband's absences--first for "business," later for pure wandering--afford her. Snowdie is thus not "doomed to perpetual loneliness" (Arnold, M. 69) but is her own best company. Refusing even to keep a Negro ("she didn't know how to tell one what to do if she had" [265]), another flouting of southern convention, Snowdie prefers to do everything for herself, in more than one sense of the expression. Snowdie creates an order which exists purely for her own pleasure, since MacLain is never present to enjoy it, an order which is an extension of her own calm and "untracked" identity. "At her house it was like Sunday

even in the mornings, every day in that cleaned-up way. She was taking a joy in her fresh untracked rooms and that dark, quiet, real quiet hall that runs through her house" (266-67). Yet Snowdie's calm is not contingent on MacLain's absence, for "she was not afraid of all the mud" (336) that he might bring in, as Mattie Will Holifield, another woman who is later connected with King MacLain, points out.

Patricia Yaeger interprets this passage morosely, describing Snowdie's house as her coffin where she is on display for King, with no chance to wander ("Dialogic Imagination" 566). This interpretation, however, ignores Snowdie's "joy" in her surroundings and the cause of her quiet calm: "It was the not waiting [for King] any more" (267). Though her circumstances are the same as "man's dream" Cixous describes in "Sorties," Snowdie's response to it is not. Cixous writes, "[She is] kept at a distance so that he can enjoy the ambiguous advantages of the distance, so that she, who is distance and postponement, will keep alive the enigma" (Cixous and Clement 67).

The community seems more preoccupied with MacLain's whereabouts than does Snowdie; as the following quote suggests, Snowdie is, in a way that differs from her husband, also "a thousand miles away," distant and distinctly Other from those seated around her.

Going down the aisle she held up her head for the benefit of them all, while they considered Mr. MacLain a thousand miles away. And when they sang in church with her, they might as well have sung,

'A thousand miles away.
A thousand miles away.' (336--emphases mine)

Two episodes in particular illustrate the power of Snowdie's own independence and will and the extent of her self-possession. The first is when she tells Katie that she is pregnant. Appropriately, it is Easter time, and Snowdie is at the center of that season of growth, new life, and renewal. "Her sunbonnet ribbons . . . jumping around her: springtime" (265), she stands at the head of Katie's cow, Lady May, and the pasture is a verdant backdrop for her centrality: "the pasture was all spotty there behind her little blue skirt, in sweet clover" (266). Significantly, she regards the news of her pregnancy as hers alone, almost as though the conception was an autonomous act: "'I'm going to have a baby too, Miss Katie. Congratulate me'" (266--emphasis mine). Appropriately, then, the names she gives her twin boys reflect her dissociation from her husband, for she names them for members of her family: Eugene Hudson carries her maiden name and Lucius Randall is named after her mother's father, the latter privileging maternal lineage.

Most significant, however, is Snowdie's golden appearance.

She looked like more than only the news had come over her. It was like a shower of something had struck her, like she'd been caught out in something bright. It was more than the day. There with her eyes all crinkled up with always fighting the light, yet she was looking out bold as a lion tha day under her brim, and gazing into

my bucket and into my stall like a visiting somebody. (266)

Katie Rainey, as was shown earlier, associates this goldenness with MacLain; thus, she interprets Snowdie's appearance as a transformation effected by her intimate contact with MacLain. A closer look at the language of the passage, however, reveals that Snowdie is the "visiting somebody," not MacLain, a presence to Katie, offering her the otherness, undefinability, and expansiveness she herself embodies. Katie says Snowdie gazes "into my bucket and into my stall." Moreover, her eyes, normally "crinkled up with always fighting the light" (266) --elsewhere it is noted that she "shut[s] the West out of [her] eyes" (270), the West being MacLain's imagined "golden" habitation (268)--on this occasion "[look] out bold as a lion" (266). Snowdie is not, in other words, blinded by MacLain's presence or influence, showing herself not to be "a little white kitty in a basket" (266) but a lion, "making you wonder if she just mightn't put up her paw and scratch, if anything was, after all, to come near" (266).

Such boldness, of course, is not achieved without a struggle, as the phrase "fighting the light" suggests. It is implied that Snowdie fights not only others' but her own occasional tendency to be defined in light of her relationship to King and struggles to be her own light.

Snowdie's glow persists long after her encounter in the woods with her husband, further suggesting that it is a light fueled by her own identity. In fact, her face seems perhaps even to brighten with the news of her husband's presumed drowning in the Big Black River, the second of the two episodes. Not an evidence of her apathy or antipathy towards her husband, but rather a sign of her personal strength and autonomy, Snowdie's glow bewilders the rest of the community, who cannot comprehend a response at odds with propriety and convention. Snowdie's glow seems a deliberate refusal and reversal of the "shadow" which Cixous describes as man's mantle for women: "she is in the shadow. In the shadow he throws on her; the shadow she is" (Cixous and Clement 67).

Snowdie kept just as bright and brave, she didn't seem to give in. She must have had her thoughts and they must have been one of two things. One that he was dead--then why did her face have the glow? It had a glow--and the other that he left her and meant it. And like people said, if she smiled then, she was clear out of reach. (266)

And, in fact, Snowdie is "out of reach," a position she seems comfortable with and which allows her the separateness necessary to her independence. Snowdie's difference is the cause of her separateness, placing her outside of convention and community expectations--a difference and a position which she shares with Miss Eckhart and Virgie Rainey, two "outcasts" who are nevertheless secure in their identities. This empathy of identity enables Snowdie, even forty years

later, to be the only one truly responsive to Virgie's needs when Virgie experiences the loss of her mother (433). Snowdie's separateness, yet her ability to give freely of herself without depletion of her own identity, is beautifully expressed in a passing description of her sharing flowers: "and she had remarkable flowers--she had her mother's way with flowers, of course. And give just as many away, except it wasn't like I or you give. She was by her own self" (267--emphasis mine). Out of the fullness of her own identity, Snowdie can give fully, and in her giving she recalls the teacher Josie describes in "The Winds," who spreads her cape wide to catch snowflakes, then runs "up and down the room quickly, quickly, to show [the students] the snowflakes" (219).

Snowdie's strong subjectivity and independence, however, do not exclude her from a need for relationality: if they did, they could be considered negative and isolating attributes rather than enriching ones. Snowdie thus does not shut herself off from desire and emotion, but allows them expression while refusing objectification. The episode most illustrative of this balance is MacLain's return at Halloween time.

Most of "A Shower of Gold" is dedicated to describing this event. Snowdie's response to his visit, however, is given only one page, primarily because neither she nor Katie, who is helping her sew, notices MacLain's presence.

When Snowdie is told of his appearance--only after his disappearance--her response reveals both her need for relationship and her ability to stand alone. Rather than rushing like a forlorn and desperate lover after MacLain, Snowdie pauses, with "a look a minute long" (272), as if she is considering the implications of his visit and of all her possible reactions to it. Finally deciding in favor of her desire, Snowdie runs out the door in the direction of his disappearance, stripping off her apron, which perhaps identifies her more as a homemaker and mother than as a lover, as she runs. Katie regards Snowdie's response as uncharacteristic, but remarkable. "She run and the little glass prisms shook in the parlor--I don't remember another time, from her" (273--emphasis in original). Given the associations made with prisms in another Welty story, "At The Landing," Snowdie's stirring them may suggest that by giving expression to her desire she is allowing herself to participate in a fuller spectrum of possibilities than does Jenny, who will not touch the prisms and create her own colors. Even after she realizes MacLain is gone, Snowdie remains looking outward, "her face turned towards the country" (273), a stance which can of course imply discouragement and frustration. Yet it can equally suggest Snowdie's own expansive vision, her ability and continued desire to see beyond the boundaries of the community's expectations, just as Virgie is later able to do (439).

Even given this episode, it still comes as a surprise to have Snowdie admit, only many years later and after her husband has returned, in his old age, for good, that she had hired a detective to search for MacLain, spending all her money on the effort. Her comment, "'But I'll never forgive myself for tracing after him'" (448) reveals, however, that she is aware of the wrongness of that choice. Least of her regrets, no doubt, is the cost of the attempt. More regrettable is the damage done to her sense of identity in willingly compromising her independence and subjectivity. Nevertheless, her regret is an important indication of her repossession of what was momentarily compromised and a sign that Snowdie will prevail. In the end, King MacLain, the mythologized and irrepressible wanderer, is reduced to a frail old man, teetering on the edge of senility, who by his own admission has "'ended up at the wrong end'" (443). MacLain is no longer strong enough to stray from convention but must come back to it; it is now Snowdie who can part from the crowd at Katie's funeral and "[lead] her husband down a divergent path" (448).

"Sir Rabbit," though it has been considered by some to be King MacLain's story, is in several respects more Mattie Will Holifield's story than MacLain's. It, like "Shower of Gold," relates a woman's interactions with MacLain, yet as is also true of "Shower," the story is told from a woman's perspective, and it is the woman who ultimately emerges as

less restricted and bolder in exploring herself and expanding her experience. Patricia Yaeger concurs, acknowledging that Mattie Will has her own voice and power over her own story ("Dialogic Imagination" 569). In fact, "Sir Rabbit" probably goes further in de-mythologizing MacLain than any other text in the collection, and it is Mattie Will who demotes him from royalty to rabbit. Welty uses Mattie Will's name suggestively to indicate the quality and force of her identity. For example, "Will" is quite literally Mattie's middle name, and the story is replete with evidences of her willfulness and of her willingness to express her desire. Her maiden name, Sojourner, is a clear indication of her wandering spirit, demonstrated in her continual efforts to push past her husband's barricading body to get nearer to MacLain, whom Welty clearly identifies as one of the handful of wanderers in The Golden Apples. Even more intriguing is her married name, Holifield: MacLain puns on the implications of the name when he calls to Mattie, "'Show yourself, young lady. Are you a Holifield too? I don't think you are'" (336). Through his question and self-supplied answer, MacLain not only sets her apart as unrelated to her plodding, dull-witted husband, but more importantly, doubts that she is a Holy Field, an unspoiled, virgin ground deeded only to Junior, her husband. The fact that Mattie Will's first words after MacLain's beckoning are "I'll just start up that little bank till I see what he's

after, Junior'" (336) is solid evidence that she in fact sees herself more as a Sojourner than as a Holifield.

Mattie Will's subjectivity is, in fact, primarily voiced through her uninhibited sexuality, a point that Patricia Yaeger also develops when she remarks that Mattie Will tries to "reinscribe [the limits of convention], to become the author of her own sexuality" ("Dialogic Imagination" 571). "Sir Rabbit" is divided into two sections; the first describes her first sexual encounter at age fifteen with--predictably and appropriately--the MacLain twins. The second occurs an unspecified number of years later, after Mattie Will's marriage to Junior Holifield, and recounts their meeting MacLain in the woods as Junior is shooting birds.¹ Even at age fifteen, Mattie Will demonstrates a strongly developed boldness and independence. Knowing that someone--who she believes is King MacLain--is watching her from behind a tree, Mattie Will goes beyond her own fear to assert her awareness and ability to "[stand] her ground" (331). "When it came down to it, scared or not, she wanted to show him she'd heard all about King MacLain and his way" (331). Mattie Will instinctively knows that the twins have come for sex, and she does not resist their advances, though she is capable of doing so--she mentions having "kicked Old Man Flewellyn out of the dewberry patch" (332). Instead, she willingly embarks on a journey that she knows will take her beyond her present experience and

irrevocably alter her identity. "[S]he felt at that moment as though somewhere a little boat was going out on a lake, never to come back" (331). Welty's use--again--of voyage imagery, of a boat which carries a woman into open water, expands the parameters of Mattie's experience and opens herself to what she at first perceives as distinctly Other. "If it was Mr. King, he was, suddenly, looking around both sides of the tree at once--two eyes here and two eyes there, two little Adam's apples, and all those little brown hands" (331).

After they have sex, the three sit in "the playing light that came down like a fountain" and eat "as many sticks of candy as they felt like eating out of one paper sack for three people" (332--emphasis mine). The image suggests both the mutual enjoyment of the sex act and the initiation of Mattie Will's sexual hunger, the pleasure with which she adds this aspect to her experience.

The desire to add to her experience is also Mattie Will's motive for initiating sex with King MacLain, for her encounter with him is most certainly not rape. In particular, Mattie Will is drawn to the almost mythical otherness she feels MacLain embodies. Having sex with him becomes an intercourse with otherness. When she and her husband first glimpse MacLain at a distance in the woods, Mattie Will's gaze is immediately "far-sighted" (333) and she pushes past the obstruction of her husband's body which

he continues to place before her. "[S]he pushed her way around her husband. . . . He pulled her back" (334). Eventually, however, she moves free of his restriction, and her bold and open stance between the two men, both of whom are hiding behind trees, reveals her as a woman who does not defend herself against the influences which surround her (334). In this position, she recalls Helene Cixous' description of a woman's openness to a multiplicity of pleasure: "[N]o woman stockpiles as many defenses for countering the drives as does a man. You don't build walls around yourself, you don't forego pleasure as 'wisely' as he" (NFF 251). Thus, Junior's declaration to MacLain that there "'ain't e'er young lady folling after me that you can catch a holt of'" (335) is partially true. Mattie has enough independence to enable her to remain out of MacLain's reach, yet she will--and does--allow herself to be "caught," through her constant movement forward.

As Mattie Will climbs the bank toward MacLain, MacLain fires a load of shot towards Junior. Believing he is shot ("he would always think he was shot through the heart if anybody's gun but his went off" [337]), Junior leaps into the air and falls across a felled tree, which knocks him unconscious. It is MacLain, not Mattie Will, who checks to see if he is alive. Even after she has sex with MacLain and he has left, Mattie Will has no desire to rouse Junior but

enjoys the freedom and opportunity to roam that his being unconscious allows her to enjoy (339).

Only three paragraphs are given to the description of Mattie Will's and King MacLain's sexual encounter. This rather scant attention to the sex act, and the pages which follow that are devoted to Mattie Will's independent wandering in the woods both work to move the focus from male sexual power to woman's independent subjectivity and the boundless range of female identity. In fact, even the paragraphs which refer to the sexual encounter focus on what Mattie Will can gain from the experience, how her identity can be augmented by the act.

MacLain has always been regarded as an elusive, mysterious spirit in Morgana, the quinessential wanderer who is notorious for his voracious sexuality. By having sex with MacLain, Mattie Will demonstrates her eagerness to participate in that spirit, to experience his purported Otherness, to expand the range of her identity by accessing, through the sex act, the unknown, the previously only-imagined.

Presently she . . . saw those eyes above hers, as keenly bright and unwavering and apart from her life as the flowers on a tree. . . . Like submitting to another way to talk, she could answer to his burden now, his whole blithe, smiling, superior, frantic existence. . . . Her arms dropped back to the mossiness, and she was Mr. MacLain's Doom, or Mr. MacLain's Weakness, like the rest, and neither Mrs. Junior Holifield nor Mattie Will Sojourner; now she was something she had always heard of. (338--emphases mine)

What Mattie Will actually receives from the sexual escapade is not nearly so magnificent as what she had expected, and she has the honesty not only to face MacLain's reality, but to not be disappointed by her diminished view of him. "[S]he gazed . . . at the one hand, the other hand, the bent leg and the straight, all those parts looking no more driven than her man's now, or of any more use than a heap of cane thrown up by the mill and left in the pit to dry" (340). Reduced now in Mattie Will's eyes to little more than the "Sir Rabbit" of a tired nursery rhyme--"[t]hat was all that went through Mattie Will's head" (340)--a frantically copulating wild little animal with a "puckered face" and "square brown teeth" (338), MacLain is no longer other, but very much the same as every other man she knows.

Whatever mystical or mythical remains about MacLain seems quite clearly to be what Mattie Will allows to remain, not what is an actual and inherent quality of his identity. "And he did not know that there was nothing she could or would take away from him--Mr. King MacLain" (340--emphasis mine). In fact, it is more accurately she who explores with fascination the constantly expanding borders of her identity and who can create otherness and fullness from what is sameness and flat reality for him. Coming upon MacLain sleeping in the woods, it is Mattie Will who "listen[s] to the world go round" (340) while MacLain unconsciously snores on. His snores are "an old song" to him, yet for her they

sound "as if all the frogs of spring were inside him" (340). By watching him, "she was not denying a thing in this world, but now had time to look at anything she pleased and study it (339--emphasis mine).

Even after she leaves MacLain's presence, Mattie Will's vision remains altered--her view is fuller, more expansive, and it is she, not MacLain, who now "look[s] away into the big West" (340).

She could see the drift of it all, the stretched land below the little hills, and the Big Black, clear to MacLain's Courthouse, almost, the Stark place plain and the fields, and their farm, everybody's house above trees, the MacLains'--the white floating peak--and even Blackstone's granny's cabin[.] . . . And Morgana all in rays, like a giant sunflower in the dust of Saturday. (340)

A similar expansiveness of vision awaits Nina in "Moon Lake." "Moon Lake"'s setting differs from the other stories of the collection in that it shares the atmospheres of two worlds: of civilization and wilderness. Set in a girl's camp three miles from Morgana, "Moon Lake" draws from aspects of both. In the midst of wilderness, ritualized activities are scheduled; in the absence of parental figures, surrogate mothers are supplied: not only the two camp counselors fit this description, but Lizzie Stark, the leading lady of Morgana, is the elected Camp Mother, who comes daily to check on her brood. Even their table is neither entirely table nor entirely tree, but both (365). Because such a setting disrupts social codes which restrict

women to parlors and moves women away from culture and history and closer to natural forces, Gilbert and Gubar regard it as woman's place: it is, like women, on the margin of nature and culture (Sexchanges 98-102).

If the two worlds can somehow coexist, the inhabitants of them cannot. They are, so to speak, divided into two camps--the Morgana girls come from a world of order, where authority is clearly defined and structure is a comforting basis of their existence; they are therefore most comfortable within the borders of the camp. The orphans, who create their own community of support and lack the individual attention--and restriction--of parents, are more at ease in--and therefore more frequently seek out--the woods which are beyond the boundaries of the camp. The story focuses upon three girls, each of whom establishes a specific perspective. Jinny Love remains throughout the story solidly identified with Morgana; Easter, the "leader" of the orphans, participates fully in the wilderness around her, enjoying a range both geographic and experiential which Nina, Jinny Love's friend and a Morgana girl, admires and yearns to emulate.

Her family heritage deeply rooted in Morgana, Jinny Love is the voice of convention and tradition in "Moon Lake." Jinny Love is the daughter of Lizzie Stark, who "hates all men and is real important" (267). Lizzie, the self-appointed matriarch of Morgana, is at the center of

that society and regulates its movements. Jinny Love has learned well from her mother: though she possesses both independence and subjectivity, they originate in and are motivated by a strongly-developed sense of self-importance and desire for control. Jinny Love's subjectivity, in other words, is grounded in a singularity of perspective in which her "I" is of paramount and exclusive importance. She is the object of her own narcissistic gaze, so that her own image is reflected back to her. Her subjectivity, then, can perhaps alternately be thought of as total self-objectification. Neither is her independence conducive to range and openness. For Mrs. Larkin of "A Curtain of Green" or Dicey of "Kin," for example, independence enhances their openness and receptivity. Freed of the restriction of memory and insensateness, Mrs. Larkin's new autonomy makes her open to a fullness of experience. Dicey's independence enables both relationality and a fluidity of identity. In Jinny Love, however, independence is a self-conscious strategy designed to assert her authority and pre-eminence, thus cutting her off from relationship and refusing other perspectives.

For example, in "Moon Lake" Jinny Love manipulates Mrs. Gruenwald through the use of carefully chosen voices. "'Let's let the orphans go in the water first and get the snakes stirred up, Mrs. Gruenwald,' Jinny Love Stark suggested first off, in the cheerful voice she adopted

toward grown people" (344). Later, trying to establish her self-importance and autonomy, Jinny Love commands Nina to "'pretend Easter's not with us'" (357). Both quotations illustrate Jinny Love's singularity of identity--her rejection of anything or anyone outside her realm of experience, her exclusivity of vision. Thus she "close[s] the circle" (347) throughout the text, reproducing sameness and rejecting otherness.

Nina Carmichael is rarely seen apart from Jinny Love and is quite frequently open to her suggestion. They are described at different points as "entwined" (350, 353) and even as "indented with each other, like pressed leaves" (350). Nevertheless, Nina has an openness to otherness which Jinny Love lacks and is drawn to the orphan Easter's difference. Pity, however, is not the cause for her attraction, for in the orphan's unaffected nature and in the freedom of her movement, Nina finds nothing to pity. "Half the people out here with me are orphans. Orphans. Orphans. She yearned for her heart to twist. But it didn't, not in time" (346).

Much of what we are told about Easter is given through Nina's point of view. Thus, the Easter portrayed is sometimes what Nina imagines or wants her to be rather than (or in addition to) the elusive, ultimately unknowable "real" Easter. Yet Nina seems to be a reliable narrator, for her descriptions and interpretations of Easter are

consistent with the view we receive of her through her actions, speech, and attitudes. Ultimately, however, unfolding Nina's perception of Easter is more important than uncovering a "real" Easter. Nina's consciousness is the focus of "Moon Lake," and even if she were completely "wrong" in her perception of Easter--which she is not--just the fact that she has the ability to imagine the openness, freedom of movement, and indefinability which she attributes to Easter is evidence enough of Nina's capacity for difference and multiple possibilities within her own identity.

Easter's influence is so powerful that even Jinny Love vows that she will always remember her (358), though of course she does not. Associated only with her mother ("I haven't got no father. I never had, he ran away," Easter says [358]), Easter's identity as a female is especially pronounced (Westling, Welty 143). In the course of the story, she is portrayed as being connected with life and death, goldenness and darkness, openness and withholding, Moon Lake and the woods--a multiplicity of associations which emphasize her capacity for fullness which may include even contradiction.

Easter is immediately perceived to be in charge of the orphans (344), though she does nothing to establish or enforce her authority. Nina recognizes that Easter's leadership is a natural aspect of her identity, not a

manipulative effort at control or a self-absorbed show of importance, as it is for Jinny Love. "Easter was dominant for what she was in herself--for the way she held still, sometimes" (346).

Neither does Easter diminish her bold subjectivity when dealing with adults. When Mr. Nesbitt, the Bible Class leader who arranges for the orphans to attend camp, stares at her breasts, Easter quite literally bites the hand that feeds her when she bites Mr. Nesbitt's hand (347). Nina considers it "wonderful to have with them someone dangerous but not, so far, or provenly, bad" (347).

Easter's unrestricted range of being, her defiant individuality, do not coalesce with the structure imposed by the camp, and she frequently disregards its regimen as confining, moving instead to her own rhythms and for her own purposes. Interestingly, Jinny Love also at points rejects the scheduled activities, but her motivation is far different from Easter's. Easter defies structure in order to maintain the separateness of her self and to exercise her independence, as evidenced by the fact that her rebellions are spontaneous and rarely announced and never include an invitation for others to join her. Jinny Love "escapes" scheduled activities to draw attention to herself by being "missed," again revealing that her vision includes no one but herself. (When Jinny Love cuts a basket weaving session with Nina, she does so in the hope that "'They'll think

we're drowned'" [351] and delays their return because she is not convinced they have missed her yet [356]).

Jinny Love considers herself to be central to the order of the camp; her absences, she supposes, will result in a breakdown of its normal functioning. Though claiming equal nonconformity with Easter, Jinny Love actually acquiesces to the very structure she claims to resist. For example, when Easter matter-of-factly declares that she does not have to submit to the camp's routine swimming sessions, Jinny Love claims kinship with Easter's self-assertion: "'So you needn't think you're the only one, Easter, not always'" (351). Yet even as she speaks these words, she is putting on her bathing cap, and when it slips over her eyes, more than one kind of blindness is implied.

Nina's description of Easter's eyes reveals the extent to which she associates Easter with a multiplicity of identity.

Easter's eyes, lifting up, were neither brown nor green nor cat; they had something of metal, flat ancient metal, so that you could not see into them. Nina's grandfather had possessed a box of coins from Greece and Rome. Easter's eyes could have come from Greece or Rome that day. . . . The color in Easter's eyes could have been found somewhere, away--away, under lost leaves--strange as the painted color of the ants. Instead of round black holes in the center of her eyes, there might have been women's heads, ancient. (348)

In Easter's eyes, Nina sees some of the undefinability ("you could not see into them," she says, and describes them as "strange," struggling to place their color and quality),

distance (they are from "somewhere, away--away"), and otherness (she associates them with foreign countries, ancient coins, lost leaves, and ants) of Easter's identity. Though "Jinny Love stopped short of apprehending this [the fullness that her eyes contain]," Nina searches deeper, and explicitly connects Easter's otherness with a femaleness she can not yet comprehend (348). This is because she sees in Easter's eyes not a reflection of the self/same, but the other in the "coin" of Easter's eyes (Pitavy-Souques, "Blazing Butterfly" 552). Interestingly, these coins (which possibly are embossed with the "women's heads, ancient") were in an earlier draft of this story said to have belonged to Miss Eckhart (Schmidt 167), suggesting that Easter participates in the same otherness, refusal of restriction, and range of identity that Miss Eckhart possesses so strongly.

Another image which more subtly suggests Easter's wide-ranging identity, her free self-exploration, is her association with goldenness, which connects her with MacLain, another wanderer who rejects restriction. "Easter's hair [is] a withstanding gold" (346), and she "seem[s] spectacular from crested gold head to hard, tough heel" (347); even the ring of dirt on her neck is described as being "like the mark a gold bracelet leaves on the arm" (347). It is not necessary, as some have attempted (see, for example, Peter Schmidt 59), to prove a biological

connection between Easter and MacLain, who is said to have "children of his growing up in the County Orphans'" (264). What is important is their connection in spirit, and it is interesting to note that Easter's goldenness is "withstanding" while MacLain's is more glittering and ephemeral, a reality that his portrayal in "The Wanderers" bears out.

A scene which further reinforces Nina's view of Easter's identity as multiplicitous--receptive to a wide range of possibility, exploring otherness, and allowing a fluid exchange of voices and identities--is Jinny Love's and Nina's observation of Easter during siesta, a scene which introduces some qualities of her identity which are especially pronounced in the central episode of the story, Easter's near-drowning. Easter's cot is nearest the door, closest to "the corona of afternoon [that] flared and lifted in an intensity that came through the eyelids" (350). Her cot's location establishes Easter as participating in some intensity of experience that remains distant to Jinny Love and Nina, who can only watch her remotely, "as down a long telescope turned on an incandescent star" (350), an image suggestive of the vastness and the full, burning intensity that Nina (and perhaps Jinny Love) associate with Easter. Easter dreams, curved in a posture which is both "shell-like" and the stance of a diver, with "both arms forward over her head" (350). The former image connects her with

the sea and all its implications for her female identity, and the latter suggests her eagerness to enter that medium and prefigures her later literal immersion in the waters of Moon Lake. Even in sleep, Easter's voice is pronounced; her "sighs and her prolonged or half-uttered words" fill the tent. Nina and Jinny Love interpret Easter's words as participation in a dream existence, an unknowable, wholly interior realm to which they cannot gain access: "It was an inward sound she gave--now it came again--of . . . wholehearted and fateful concurrence with the thing dreamed" (350).

This state of dreaming, according to Lowry Pei, provides another, more expansive way of interpreting the world; it rejects the naming and defining which are the "normal" ways of "making sense" of the world in favor of a personal subjectivity (421). This perhaps explains why Easter's words are "unintelligible" to Jinny Love and Nina, as incomprehensible as the withheld region of identity from which they originate. The two girls are "speechless," and dreams are to them only the name of the mosquito repellent they smear ritualistically on their bodies--"Sweet Dreams Mosquito Oil" (350). This inner realm of consciousness which Easter possesses and participates in expands the range of her identity and allows an otherness to her self; it is also nearly identical to the withheld self which is described so fully in Easter's resuscitation scene.

Such change, however, is difficult to realize. Nina is a mass of contradictions in this regard, as her comment early in the story illustrates. "I hate this little parade of us girls, Nina thought, trotting fiercely in the center of it. It ruins the woods, all right" (343--emphases mine). Only as Nina aligns herself more closely with Easter does she develop a subjectivity and independence similar to Easter's, which allow the openness and range and lack of restriction she admires in Easter.

This is precisely what happens, as a gradual and sometimes faltering progression, in the woods outside the boundaries of camp. In her insightful study of Eudora Welty's fiction, Louise Westling remarks that the women of Welty's texts "move freely and comfortably across the landscape, at the center of a world which affirms them and denies male pretensions of control" (Sacred Groves 179). They are able to explore the regions surrounding them with such ease because they possess an independence and otherness that is beyond male definition.

Though this comfortableness in nature is common to many of Welty's fictional women, there are of course exceptions to this pattern and with some of her women, this ease is gradually acquired, not inherent. This seems to be the case in "Moon Lake," in which the orphans, and particularly Easter, have a natural relationship to the woods surrounding the camp, whereas Jinny Love and Nina move among the woods

rather cautiously, keeping themselves apart from full participation in it. Nina, however, gradually moves from this position to a more comfortable coexistence with nature. For both Nina and Easter, however, becoming comfortable with the woods' boundlessness and wildness results in a "reaffirm[ation] of the old female powers of the land" (Westling, Sacred Groves 183) and access to a full plurality of female identity.

Both Jinny Love and Nina recognize the woods as a region beyond the "civilizing" power of rules and roles for women, a place where basketweaving lessons are left behind and where no surrogate mothers demand an accounting of them. Though they are in some respects eager to escape such limitation, they are not prepared to abandon it altogether. Thus, they follow only defined paths through the woods, even walking single file to avoid touching the "pressing" walls of vine and overhanging trees (351). Interestingly, despite her cautiousness, Jinny Love nevertheless gets poison ivy, an indication of her negative relationship to nature (371). Through the similes she has the girls use to describe the different aspects of the woods, Welty emphasizes their efforts to "civilize" the somewhat frightening wilderness. For example, the trees and vines form "walls" which they pass between (351), the dust that spurts up between their toes "felt like the powder clerks pump into new kid gloves, as Jinny Love said twice" (352), the cracked ditch bottoms

look "like a dropped vase" and the mistletoe forms a "table in the tree" (352). At the spring, Nina opens and collapses her drinking cup "like a lady with a fan," then stands daintily bent from the waist to fill the cup with water (346).

By contrast, Easter lies full length upon the ground and "drink[s] from the cup of her hand with her face in the spring" (346), allowing her body full contact with nature. She and the other orphans seem to have an innate connection with the wildness and expanse of the woods, for they "[sniff] out the way to the spring by themselves" (345) and never tire of the play they create with nature, sliding over pine needles and running through the sand (346). A particular pleasure for them is imprinting the spring's sandy floor with their feet and watching the indentations dissolve in the flowing water, play which may suggest their fluidly-changing identities, the ease with which they can allow aspects of their selves to change (346).

Nina's belief that the orphans have a more natural relationship with nature may be partially based on class stereotype. Having no known family which can offer them a "place" in civilization (in a southern world in which family history rigidly defines one's position in society and the degree of "civilization" one possesses), the orphans, in Nina's view, may "naturally" be assigned a "place" in nature. Lacking the guidance of family and of "civilized"

society and the moral values these espouse, the orphans may be considered to be more at home in the wildness of the woods and less vulnerable to the sexual threat implied in that wildness.

Since the woods contains a range of feminine possibilities, certainly sexuality would be one element of female experience which they must confront. Interestingly, the woods are presented as a sexual threat only to the Morgana girls. Twosie, the black camp helper, identifies the threat as the hunters who frequent the woods. "'Yawl walk right by mans wid great big gun, could jump out at yawl. Yawl don't eem smellim'" (349). Though both Jinny Love and Nina attempt to diminish the danger of the hunters, their presence is nevertheless real and imminent. Presumably the hunters--Ran MacLain, carrying on the reputation of his father, foremost among them--are waiting for the camp season to end before they take over the woods, yet Ran's appearance before camp breaks indicates that the girls must respond to male sexuality sooner than they anticipate.

Predictably, Jinny Love and Nina, as they walk through the woods, specifically avoid the "Queen Anne's lace and elderberry and blackberry thickets, loaded heavily with flower and fruit and smelling with the melony smell of snake, [which] overhung the ditch to touch them" (352). By maintaining their distance from these, the girls are denying

themselves access to fruitfulness and productivity suggested by the fruit, and avoiding the sexuality implied by the snake. When they see Easter, as usual, walking ahead of them, she is significantly eating fruit from her hand, and the back of her dress is stained green. If Easter's stained dress does not carry all the implications of Faulkner's Caddy Compson's "muddy drawers," it at least recalls them and implies Easter's more mature and acceptant attitude toward her sexuality." Perhaps in this sense it is significant that Jinny Love wants the orphans to enter Moon Lake before the Morgana girls to "'get the snakes stirred up . . . [so] they'll be chased away by the time we go in'" (344), and certainly it is important that Easter alone of the girls in the woods is the one to see a snake drop into the water and to be intrigued, not frightened, by it (354). It is surely a deliberate and apt choice of words to describe Easter's interaction with the woods as a powerful mating which results in a broadened perspective, a fuller range of vision and identity: ". . . Easter, one arm tilted, charged against the green bank and mounted it. Nina felt her surveying the spring and all from above" (346--emphasis mine). Perhaps by giving Easter a sexual position which is conventionally seen as male, Welty is implying that Easter is not reduced to a passive position and can respond to male sexuality with an equal force. In fact, she does precisely this in the resuscitation scene described later.

Given the contrasts between the two groups, it is understandable that Nina feels like an intruder in a domain that Easter seems wholly to possess. Importantly, however, Easter does not claim ownership. "'It ain't my road'" (353) Easter replies when the girls ask if they can come with her. Easter will not limit the woods by defining it as hers, but allows it to remain as an otherness with which she can interact, each interaction effecting a change in herself. Luce Irigaray speaks of this possibility when she writes that "[w]oman enjoys a closeness with the other that is so near she cannot possess it, any more than she can possess herself. She constantly trades herself for the other" (NFF 105--emphasis in original)

Nina is irresistibly drawn to Easter's independence and self-assurance because Easter's independence and strength as a subject, unlike Jinny Love's, do not isolate Easter in a proud exclusivity of self but rather create the desire in others for nearness. Nina imagines Easter's self-possession as "beatific," reminiscent of the inner world of dream in which Easter participates during siesta. As Easter's dreaming voice calls to Nina during siesta, so now does Nina sense a part of Easter's self being offered to her: "Even on being watched, Easter remained not answerable to a soul on earth. Nobody cared! And so, in this beatific state, something came out of her" (352--emphasis in original). Nina and Jinny Love respond by linking their arms around

Easter, a gesture that at first seems designed more to control than to be guided. "[Easter] seemed very tender and very small in the waist to be trudging along so doggedly, when they had her like that" (353--emphasis mine). When Easter breaks from their embrace, however, only Nina follows Easter into the pathless woods, "untwin[ing] her arm from Jinny Love's" to do so (353)--an act which shows Nina's desire to be guided.

Nina and Easter, dipping under a second, unexpected fence, went on, swaying and feeling their feet pulled down, reaching to the trees. Jinny Love was left behind[.] . . . The swamp was now all-enveloping, dark and at the same time vivid, alarming--it was like being inside the chest of something that breathed and might turn over.

Then there was Moon Lake, a different aspect altogether. (353-54)

Her movements in fluid sync with Easter's, Nina crosses boundaries to enter into the swamp, a place alive and multiplicitous in its otherness, its contradictions, its movement and variety, and a place which leads to the open expanse of Moon Lake, a side very different from the roped-off shore to which they are accustomed.

Moon Lake, as the title of the work makes clear, is central to the story. It is at the center of the feminine-identified wilderness, surrounded on every side by woods, and through its name connects two images associated explicitly with the feminine--moon and water. The girls' responses to Moon Lake therefore indicate the differing range and fullness of their female identities. Nina, for

example, notices that Easter looks at it "as though it floated really on the Moon," and Nina herself, though she quickly dismisses the possibility, at least entertains the same thought (344). Only these two recognize in Moon Lake a true sense of otherness, of distance and the unknown, qualities which, through extension of this feminine image, can also characterize their female identities. The lake's association with multiplicity is confirmed when it is revealed that there are limitless Moon Lakes, "'Moon Lakes . . . all over the world'" (373), in distant Austria as well as "three miles from Morgana, Mississippi" (344).

Though of course a lake is a contained body of water, not flowing to any greater expanse, Moon Lake is evidently fed by a spring which wells up from the ground. The imagery used at points to describe the lake also portrays it as unbounded and flowing with an inexplicable and uncontained current: "Moon Lake came in like a flood below the ridge" (359); "Luminous of course but hidden from them, Moon Lake streamed out in the night. By moonlight sometimes it seemed to run like a river" (361). In addition, beyond the roped-off "safety" of the camp swimming area, "lay the deep part, some bottomless parts" (361), beyond limitation, an infinite range.

In that open expanse, as in the woods earlier, snakes do exist, yet Welty suggests that they need not be considered sexual threats; rather, they can simply be

regarded as augmenting the fullness and variety which can characterize female sexuality. Gilbert and Gubar suggest that water described as snake-like (or, by extension, snakes in the water) is a "deliberate inversion of conventional theological images" and can constitute an "alternate paradise" for women (Sexchanges 104). In "Moon Lake," "all snakes, harmless and harmful, were freely playing now; they put a trailing, moony division between weed and weed--bright, turning, bright and turning" (361). This is of course an aspect which none of the girls--with the exception of Easter, later--can yet realize, though the orphans again seem closer to an uninhibited sexuality than do the Morgana girls. Although they wear swimsuits under their kimonos, the Morgana girls, "exposing themselves felt in a hundred places at once the little pangs" (344--emphasis mine). The orphans, by contrast, "[rip] their dresses off over their heads and [stand] in their underbodies" (344), sensing no shame in their physical bodies. Yet neither group can adequately swim, or even feel at ease in the water. "None of [the orphans] could or would swim, ever" (344), and the Morgana girls do well to even keep their heads above water.

Gilbert and Gubar point out that learning to swim can indicate a process of awakening, as is true for Edna Pontieller in The Awakening. Swimming can be a metaphorical expression of a woman's efforts to stay afloat as a woman, to not get in over her head, particularly with reference to

her sexuality (Sexchanges 103). Moreover, it can enable an immersion in the other(ness) of water, the coexistence of same and other. This is precisely what the Morgana girls attempt to do in their daily struggle with "Mr. Dip," the name one counselor gives to their ritualistic morning swim. Described using distinctly sexual language, the experience is to the girls not a "fruitful alliance of male and female humans" (as Louise Westling describes Welty's usual presentation of sex [Sacred Groves 183]) but very nearly a rape-like attack which the girls must battle against. Welty does not suggest, of course, that male aggression and female struggle is the only possible expression of female sexuality, but only that the girls are struggling to come to terms with male/female sexual relations and do not yet feel at ease with it.

'Gee, we think you're mighty nice,' they sang to Mr. Dip, gasping, pounding their legs in him. If they let their feet go down, the invisible bottom of the lake felt like soft, knee-deep fur. The sharp hard knobs came up where least expected.
(345)

Moon Lake offers far more to the girls, of course, than a confrontation with heterosexuality. Especially to Easter and to Nina, the lake offers a full realization of their possibilities as humans and is the locus for their experience of otherness and of the depth and range of their identities. When Nina follows Easter through the woods to a further shore of Moon Lake, for example, its surface allows a coexistence of opposites where differences are not

neutralized but remain distinct as same and other: "The water was quiet . . . although where the sun shone right on it the lake seemed to be in violent agitation, almost boiling. . . . [Nina] fluttered her eyelids, half closed them, and the world looked struck by moonlight" (354--emphases mine).

When Jinny Love, whom Nina and Easter have just recently left behind, enters the scene, Nina regards her as a disrupting presence. Nina's closer alignment with Easter and her movement from Jinny Love signals an important transition in her effort to move beyond convention and restraint. When Jinny Love sits upon the spot where Nina is writing in the sand, Nina draws an arrow from her to a "new place" (354). By the end of the episode, Nina distances herself even more from Jinny Love. She not only rejects Jinny Love's command to "'pretend Easter's not with us'" but also exhibits her access to Easter's mindset by replying that Easter is pretending that she is not with them. Jinny Love, "stunned," cannot comprehend how Nina "could ever know what Easter was pretending" (357).

Nina's progression towards a wider range of being through a rejection of restriction and convention, however, is not unfaltering or systematic, yet it is real, and the issues Nina raises and the hesitations she makes are necessary to her journey. Thus she vacillates between identification with Easter and comradeship with Jinny Love.

Nina literally writes out her struggle in the sands of Moon Lake.

Significantly, Nina sees in the sand multiple shapes: "The sand was coarse like beads and full of minute shells, some shaped exactly like bugles" (354), demonstrating her ability to see otherness in the sameness of grains of sand. Also important is that the sand reminds her of bugles, which later, when she hears Loch Morrison blow his bugle, she associates with movement, change, goldenness, and a "visionary" otherness.

There was another fairy sound, and the pried-apart, gentle silence. The woods seemed to be moving after it, running--the world pellmell. Nina could see the boy in the distance, too, and the golden horn tilted up. A few minutes back her gaze had fled the present and this scene; now she put the horn blower into his visionary place. (358)

In contrast to the music which Nina hears, Jinny Love's response is "prosaic," and she closes her ears to the sound (359); and, though Nina sees otherness in the sameness of sand, Jinny Love sees sameness in the otherness of the shores of Moon Lake, comparing its smell to what is familiar to her: "'It smells like the school basement to me--peepee and old erasers'" (354).

With her finger, Nina writes her name over and over in the sand, an attempt to author for her identity the mutability, range, and freedom that she so admires in Easter. "Her own hand was writing in the sand. Nina, Nina, Nina. Writing, she could dream that her self might get away

from her--that here in this faraway place she could tell her self, by name, to go or to stay" (355--emphasis mine). Nina wants for herself the beautiful spectrum of identity, of self and other, that Easter seems to possess effortlessly and unself-consciously, a naturalness suggested by the drop of water suspended on Easter's back-flung hand. "Did [Easter] see the drop of water clinging to her lifted finger? Did it make a rainbow? Not to Easter: her eyes were rolled back, Nina felt" (355).

Inspired by a sudden belief that she can herself possess such freedom and range, Nina attempts to give her belief tangibility by suggesting a voyage in the old boat Easter has earlier discovered.

'Why aren't we out in the boat?' Nina, taking a strange and heady initiative, rose to her feet. 'Out there!' A picture in her mind, as if already furnished from an eventual and appreciative distance, showed the boat floating where she pointed, far out in Moon Lake with three girls sitting in the three spaces. (355)

Easter has already initiated such a voyage for herself. Upon discovering the boat, she immediately situates herself at the bow, in "the far seat that was over the water" (354). "If this was their ship," Nina thinks to herself, "[Easter] was their figurehead, turned on its back, sky-facing. She wouldn't be their passenger" (356). Jinny Love, true to form, wants no part of this identity-expanding journey. "'But I don't choose to sit myself in a leaky boat. . . . I choose the land'" (354), she declares, and embeds herself

firmly into her choice by building a sand castle over her foot. When she finally does join the other two in the boat--purely out of a fear of exclusion--she chooses for herself the "lady's seat" (356) and becomes a passive passenger.

Nina alone takes the initiative to free the boat from where it is stuck in the mud at the lake's edge. Resisting the downward pull of the mud which "like some awful kiss pulled at her toes" (355), Nina uses the full force of her body to send the boat into free water. Unafraid because she senses a new power within herself, Nina declares that she does not even need the boat to enable her journey: "'What do I care, I can swim!' Nina cried at the water's edge" (355).

As the boat begins to float towards open water, Easter suddenly sits up; Nina describes her face as resembling a pear. It is significant enough that she would identify Easter with this female-shaped fruit, yet even more important that it is not a common pear she has in mind, but a "beautiful, symmetrical, clean [pear] with thin [skin]," a pear that is perfect in its individuality, richness, and beauty (356). Easter is like a pear

so delicate that while you urgently ate the first half, the second half was already beginning to turn brown. To all fruits, and especially to those fine pears, something happened--the process was so swift, you were never in time for them. It's not the flowers that are fleeting, Nina thought, it's the fruits--it's the time when things are ready that they don't stay. (356)

Looking at Easter's face, Nina realizes for the first time that what Easter offers her must be chosen and enjoyed quickly, before the opportunity is missed--"the process was so swift." Nina also recognizes in Easter's identity a sort of ephemeral quality--not of loss but of change. That is, Easter's identity is alterable, capable of inexplicable and sudden transformation.

It seems that Nina's moment for change is not to be now. The boat which Nina so eagerly hoped would carry her into the open water of Moon Lake is chained to the shore, and no amount of struggle on Nina's part can extricate it. Patricia Yaeger concurs with this reading of the scene, arguing that the girls cannot go beyond themselves to reach otherness ("Dangling Signifier" 437). Later that same evening, however, Nina comes closer to comprehending that freedom and expansiveness of identity are not so contingent upon circumstance as they are upon perspective. Looking out at a motionless boat on the moonlit lake, Nina realizes that movement, change, and wonder are always present and available. Simply by surrounding herself with possibilities, Nina can participate in a fluid exchange.

Their little boat in the reeds that day had not been far from this one's wonder, after all. The turning of water and sky, of the moon, or the sun, always proceeded, and there was this magical hesitation in their midst, of a boat. And in the boat, it was not so much that they drifted, as that in the presence of a boat the world drifted, forgot. The dreamed-about changed places with the dreamer. (360)

The last line of this passage, as Lowry Pei notes, describes a reversal of the subject and object positions (421), a fluid exchange which offers entirely new perspective but which also can be considered a dangerous possibility: some of the more staid characters in The Golden Apples use naming and definition to avoid this fluidity, but those more open to change and enlarged vision engage in this exchange without harm (422). Nina, for example, wondering when she will achieve the same ripeness/fullness of identity Easter possesses, suggests that growth maybe aided by the ability to participate in both subject and object positions. This is suggested by her reversal of the roles in a nursery rhyme (Pei 422). "'Pear tree by the garden gate, How much longer must I wait?'-- thinking it was the pears that asked it, not the picker" (356).

Nina, however, must work her way to this comprehension. Again she makes her progress graphic by "writing out" her identity. This time, her exploration concerns the role naming has in determining who she is.

Nina, who still questions the very nature of identity, begins her questioning by writing her name, then Easter's, in the sand. Through so doing, Nina makes her identification with Easter explicit. Easter, however, in a display of her independence and unwillingness to allow her identity to be written--and thus determined--by anyone other

than herself, erases both names and "with a formal gesture, as if she would otherwise seem to reveal too much, wrote for herself" (357--emphasis mine). As might be expected, when Easter writes her self, the result is unique and runs directly counter to expectations. When the name Esther emerges, "in clear, high-waisted letters . . . cut into the sand" (357), Nina objects: "'Why, I call that "Esther"'" (357). Easter, demonstrating not only her indifference to convention and dissenting opinion but also her willingness to allow multiple readings of her identity, replies, "'Call it "Esther" if you want to, I call it "Easter"'" (357). Not only does Easter invent her own pronunciation, but she controls her own naming, and through it, her identity. The exchange between Easter and Nina which follows illustrates Nina's possible dependence on an outside author-ity and Easter's reliance on self alone as the determiner of her identity.

'And I named myself.'
 'How could you? Who let you?'
 'I let myself name myself.' (357)

Nina believes Easter's story yet is still unwilling to completely abandon conventional readings of language and, more essentially, to abandon her long-held view of identity as singular--signified by her belief in one proper spelling or pronunciation--and immutable, unable to be altered by perspective or interpretation. Without these qualities, she believes, identity may not be "'real'": "'Easter, I believe

you,' said Nina. 'But I just want you to spell it right. . . . Spell it right and it's real!' she cried" (357).

As Michael Kreyling points out, the word is "the first object through which the self discovers and begins to define itself as subject" (634). Nina seems to be experimenting with what Kreyling calls "the intersecting state of self, word, and world" (631). Nina believes that the self is inextricable from the word (name) which designates and defines that self and puts it out into the world and that the self cannot be a subject without first being named. Thus, to Nina, only by spelling that crucial word "right" can an identity be made "real," brought into subjectivity and known.

What Nina does not yet understand is that the true threat to self is not its unknowability or secretness, but people's tendency to restrict the self through naming--to see a person as a name, not a self, as Lowry Pei puts it (423). Nina cannot yet quite comprehend the otherness of Easter or allow her existence beyond naming. As Daniele Pitavy-Souques points out, "the other is totally unaccountable," resisting efforts to name and define it ("Blazing Butterfly" 551).

As Nina watches Easter spell out her name, she expects to see the word Easter--expects the same. The Esther that is actually written is not same, but other (551). Peter Schmidt describes this other Esther as "a secret, subversive

identity disguising itself under that name that society recognizes" (169). Writing the word, the name "reflects the person whom we call but his true character [identity] is never spelled correctly" (Pitavy-Souques 551). Nina is split between two impulses. As Schmidt points out, in the act of "properly" spelling Easter's name (but spelling it as Easter) Nina both celebrates Easter's individuality and non-conformity and demonstrates her continuing tendency to want "correctness" (169).

Throwing her body over Easter's name she has written in the sand (another self/other "nearness"), Nina protects it from Easter's alteration or erasure, which to her signals annihilation of Easter as a subject but which to Easter only indicates a fluidity of identity, an ability to move from one identity to another without loss.

Nina ultimately considers Easter's name "'real beautiful'" and accepts for herself all the implications of that name. Easter saves her, at least for a time, from Jinny Love's limiting perspectives and Nina is given new life through expanding her identity to include Easter's otherness. In the added dimension of its spelling as "Esther," Easter's name reiterates these redemptive possibilities, for Esther was also a Biblical rescuer--a woman--who saved her people from annihilation.

Jinny Love, by contrast, finds Easter's name merely "'tacky'" (357). Predictably, Jinny Love bases identity's

merit exclusively upon convention, class, and tradition; not upon uniqueness, but heritage: these alone determine "rightness."

'I was named for my maternal grandmother, so my name's Jinny Love. It couldn't be anything else. Or anything better. You see? Easter's just not a real name. It doesn't matter how she spells it, Nina, nobody ever had it. Not around here.'
(357--emphasis mine)

Her response shows her belief in a singularity and an inevitability--even possibly a belief in the predetermination--of identity.

Of the thirty-three pages which constitute the story "Moon Lake," twelve are devoted to describing Easter's near-drowning, demonstrating the centrality of this scene to the text. No other episode in the story better describes the fullness, indefinability, and otherness of Easter's identity. Throughout the scene, Easter allows none of her fullness to be taken from her; her "withheld life" preserves the strength of her identity and allows her subjectivity, independence, and voice unmitigated expression. In these ways, of course, she resembles Christ in her ultimate ability to be undepleted by the "death" she experiences, giving her name added significance.

The incident begins with Easter standing high above Moon Lake on the camp's diving board, "the sky under her" (363). Easter falls when Exum, the black son of the camp's cook, brushes her heel with a twig. It is important that Exum is strongly, if briefly, associated with the woods and

the lake. He is said to "constantly [move] along an even further fringe of the landscape than Loch" (362), who, as will later be shown, lives a separate and expansive existence, avoiding the camp and its structures as often as possible. Exum also draws from the lake a multitude of "things," for he is continually "fishing around the bend from their side of the lake, catching all kinds of things. Things, things" (362).

Easter stands on the diving board almost in defiance of the fact that she cannot swim. Yet, in another sense, she is the most accomplished swimmer of all, for in the way that her body, as it falls, actively "meet[s]" the air (363), in the way that she is "standing free in space, then handled and turned over by the blue air itself" (372), Easter fits Helene Cixous' description of an "airborne swimmer" (NFF 260). Such a woman, according to Cixous, "does not cling to herself; she is dispersible, prodigious, stunning, desirous and capable of others, of the other woman that she will be, of the other woman she isn't, of him, of you" (260). Easter does, in fact, display such openness to otherness, mutability, and unknowability just minutes later as she is being resuscitated. By her "positive . . . disappearance" into the water of the roped-off swimming area and her near irretrievability, Easter also demonstrates that depths can be reached even within carefully defined and "safe" boundaries.

It at first seems difficult to see Easter's near-drowning and resuscitation by Loch as enriching encounters with otherness or as identity-enlarging experiences. Patricia Yaeger, in her article, "The Case of the Dangling Signifier: Phallic Imagery in Eudora Welty's 'Moon Lake,'" for example, argues that Easter's resuscitation (which is described in language suggestive of rape) is evidence that Welty regards woman's "disempowerment" as a sort of necessary evil (441) and portrays Easter as "patriarchy's first victim" (438). Through the rape-like experience, Yaeger claims, Easter learns feminine passivity and is initiated into a stunted life.

Yet Yaeger deconstructs her own argument in describing Easter's response to the "rape." Yaeger admits, for example, that "snakes" metaphorically emerge from Easter's mouth, evidencing her "phallic power" (438) and writes that erotic power is in the scene given to "woman's inner space" (439). Easter's silence, creativity, productivity, rebellion, and self-naming are also interpreted as "dangerous" threats to the masculine order--inexplicable claims, given Yaeger's insistence that Easter is ultimately overcome by masculine power. Inadvertently, then, Yaeger in some ways bolsters my own thesis. For though it is undeniable that Easter undergoes a figurative rape, essential to interpreting this scene is the fact that Easter

effectively resists that rape, retaining her female power and forfeiting none of her range and otherness.

The scene begins after Loch, the camp "Boy Scout and Lifesaver," retrieves Easter's unconscious body from the lake and places her on a table to begin CPR, "he lift[s] up, screw[s] his toes, and with a groan of his own [falls] upon her and [drives] up and down upon her, into her, gouging the heels of his hands into her ribs again and again" (366). The girls, horrified by the possibility of Easter's death and by the violence necessary to revive her, realize that "[l]ife-saving was much worse than they had dreamed" (366). Miss Lizzie, newly arrived, confirms their equation of the lifesaving with sexual aggression when she calls, "'But what's he doing to her? Stop that. . . . Loch Morrison, get off that table and shame on you'" (366, 367).

Yet Easter's body is "careless" (366), and certainly Loch, though possessive in his attitude, considers his actions restorative and life-giving rather than invasive and destructive. "'Keep away, I told you you better keep away. Leave me alone,' Loch Morrison was saying with short breaths. 'I dove for her, didn't I?'" (369). As the onlookers grow more accustomed to the sight, their horror changes to fascination and then even to indifference; with this shift their regard of Loch as a sexual threat is diminished. Miss Lizzie's comforting maternal presence assists in this diminishing. "Under her gaze the Boy

Scout's actions seemed to lose a good deal of significance. He was reduced almost to a nuisance--a mosquito, with a mosquito's proboscis" (367).

Certainly the final scene of the story, in which Jinny Love and Easter secretly observe Loch's naked body through his tent, affirms his limited potential as a sexual threat. "He was naked and there was his little tickling thing hung on him like the last drop on the pitcher's lip. . . . Minnowy thing that matched his candle flame, naked as he was with that, he thought he shone forth too" (373, 374). Yaeger also reads this scene as deconstructing male power ("Dangling Signifier" 447).

More important than these opinions, however, is Easter's response to what is done to her. The paragraphs which follow are intended to show that what occurs on the table is an interaction, of Easter's and Loch's open, changing, and full identities rather than Easter's helpless submission to Loch's masculine violence.

That Loch possesses the same far-ranging, unrestricted fullness of identity that characterizes Easter is evidenced throughout the story. Loch lives an existence separate from the campers, pitching his tent in the heart of the woods, "down where it all sloped away" (343). While the girls are at siesta, Loch dives from the board, high in the tree; when he must guard them as they swim, he looks far beyond them, his vision focused on the distant water (342--emphasis

mine). Even his name, the Scottish word for lake, shows the extent of his association with Moon Lake. And at night, as the girls sing "'When all the little ships come sailing home,' . . . he would be roaming off" (343--emphases mine). Nina believes that Loch and Easter interact as Easter is being resuscitated and that even their identities can somehow be fluidly exchanged, the otherness of the one being experienced by the other, though she cannot know its process or substance. "By now the Boy Scout seemed for ever part of Easter and she part of him, he in motion on the up-and-down and she stretched across. He was dripping, while her skirt dried on the table; so in a manner they had changed places too" (370--emphasis mine).

The elements of woods and water--associated throughout with female expansiveness and variety--which are used to describe Easter also indicate that she has, through her immersion in the lake, incorporated this fullness into her self. These are living elements, and her comparison to them illustrates that her identity prevails even in (un)consciousness. Her body is "pressed together as unopen leaves are," her hair is "in long fern shapes" upon her face (365); "the water lake[s] in her lap," showing her containment and preservation of the element which sustains, rather than destroys, her (364). When water comes from her mouth, the extent of her incorporation of the vastness represented by the lake is made apparent (366).

The most radical evidence to Nina of Easter's undepleted fullness, however, is what Nina sees as Easter's withheld life. Unlike the "shapeless black matter" (363) which Loch dredges from the bottom of the lake before he retrieves Easter, Easter is very much alive and even aware, despite her apparent unconsciousness. Her hand, which is "jealously clawed under her waist, as if a secret handful had been groveled for" (371), is sign and symbol of the inviolability and strength of her identity.

This concept of a withheld self requires additional explanation. Other Welty characters--and several of Porter's--close themselves off from the range of possibilities available to them and thus restrict their identities. Ellie Morgan of "The Key," for example, refuses to respond to the stranger or to consider different avenues to the fullness of identity she desires, but depends instead exclusively upon her marriage to provide the depth and variety of being she seeks. Mrs. Larkin of "A Curtain of Green" also initially closes herself off from feeling, relationship, growth, and a fullness of experience. Jinny Love's withholding is negatively self-centered: her vision does not extend beyond her self, and all she desires is sameness, not otherness, effectively shutting herself off from expansiveness of identity.

While these women's withholding, however, excludes them from experiencing a full range of identity, Easter's

withheld self protects her identity from depletion. Lowry Pei notes that "the power to withhold one's life from others becomes highly paradoxical; it is both the 'horror in life, that was at once the horror in love . . . the separateness" (460) and at the same time the crucial ability that may finally help to make one fully human" (423).

This reserved self, then, does not exist in opposition to Easter's openness to a wide range of experience and otherness, but is a complement to it, for both enhance and preserve Easter's subjectivity. Neither does openness imply a non-discriminating receptivity to all experience, but only to those which can enrich and augment the self. Virgie Rainey, for example, is the most open and expansive of all Welty's female protagonists, yet she closes herself to the mourners at her mother's funeral who demand that she grieve in a prescribed way, who attempt to control her movements. Daniele Pitavy-Souques also regards Miss Eckhart as having a withheld self. By not allowing the community to call her by her first name, Miss Eckhart rejects a practice of southern propriety and will not allow the reflection of herself to be found in the gaze of others ("Watchers and Watching" 499). When she does allow others to see her deeper self, it appears foreign and unknowable to the community (500).

Jenny's withheld self in "At The Landing" seems similar to Easter's, yet Jenny has neither the self-knowledge nor the strength of identity to maintain that self. Wanting to

share in Billy Floyd's expansiveness and freedom but unable to see the differences between her identity needs and capacities and those of Billy Floyd, Jenny opens herself to an otherness which destroys her. Her withheld self is violated, whereas Easter's resists such violation. Easter's withheld self enhances her undefinability and mysterious otherness, intensifies her autonomy and separateness, and preserves a space where her fluidity of identity, her unrestricted expression of self, can survive. Nina believes that through this withheld self, Easter can remain inviolate and assert her own power--can be a "runaway horse" (366--emphasis mine) that resists "breaking." Nina imagines Easter's willful defiance: "If he was brutal, her self, her body, the withheld life, was brutal too. . . . Let him try and try!" (366)

The force and vitality of Easter's withheld identity are pointed out repeatedly at different points during her resuscitation. Clearly, Easter's senses are still aware, but in and of a world beyond her onlookers' capacity to know. Lowry Pei thus describes her as a "perfect wanderer . . . whom no one can call home" (424). To Pei, Easter's unconsciousness is a particularly unique state. "It is not even imaginable, by definition, and yet Easter is there, still alive but in a state the mind cannot think about, and thus perhaps free not only from society but from all the confusions imposed by language or dream" (425).

Nina identifies Easter's unconsciousness as a region requiring strength to occupy and implies that the distance and depth which she now inhabits is a continuation and extension of the separateness she daily maintained.

And while not thinking, she is not dead, but unconscious, which is even harder to be. Easter had come among them and had held herself untouchable and intact. Of course, for one little touch could smirch her, make her fall so far, so deep. (368)

Nina's thoughts reveal her desire for Easter to survive, but more importantly, they expose Nina's own urgent desire for an identity which interacts, yet remains independent; which is other, yet part of the self; which is a mystery of change, yet remains "intact."

Nearly all her senses combine to enliven Easter's "far . . . deep" identity. Her eyes are never closed throughout the resuscitation scene (366), "contemplating without sense the back side of the light" (369), a region of complete otherness and mystery. Easter maintains connection with her conscious identity by continuing to hear "a great noise, back from the time she fell" (366). Most important, however, is Easter's retention of voice; her lips, parted slightly as if to speak at the beginning of her revival, open to a gape some time later (366, 368). The "secret voice" which Nina imagines as coming from Easter originates in an otherness which is frightening to her, though not to Easter, and is visually emitted from Easter's mouth. Forms that were terrible to Nina earlier as she walked through the

woods are absorbed and then offered again, extended forth by Easter; she alone does not fear the otherness or the sexuality suggested by them.

[W]as there danger that Easter, turned in on herself, might call out to them after all, from the other, worse, side of it? Her secret voice, if soundless than possibly visible, might work out of her terrible mouth like a vine, preening and sprung with flowers. Or a snake would come out. (369-70--emphasis mine)

These are a part of Easter's life blood itself, as is suggested by the blood which actually comes from her mouth immediately following this passage. Nina imagines it as a fluid/fluent speech: "it was like being spoken to" (370).

When Easter is finally resurrected, there is no faltering of her subjectivity. In fact, Elaine Pugh even suggests that Easter decides when she will revive, for she is not conquered by this experience (444); like Christ, to whom her name refers, she is not bound by limitations (Laing 132). The strength of identity which has sustained her throughout now shows itself outwardly. Easter's first act is to kick Loch backwards; she then brings her legs forward and pulls down her dress. Both are actions which demonstrate her refusal to be compromised (371). Even her first words, "'Carry me'" (372), are a command.

The expansiveness and depth of identity and the fullness which Nina regards Easter as demonstrating throughout her resuscitation are encapsulated and prefigured in an earlier scene. Welty makes the connection between

these two scenes explicit by having Easter's hand identically extended in both.

The arm was turned at the elbow so that the hand opened upward. It held there the same as it had held when the night came in and stood in the tent, when it had come to Easter and not to Nina. It was the one hand, and it seemed the one moment.
(369)

The earlier sleep scene also takes place during (un)consciousness, involves a masculine figure "encroaching" upon Easter, and includes sexual overtones. In this scene, it is Easter's openness rather than her withholding which enables her to act as a subject even in unconsciousness. More pronounced now is the fluid interplay of identities, the participation in otherness, and the exchange of fullness between the night and Easter. Nina witnesses the meeting.

The visitor is first visible to Nina as a "beast in gossamer" during the camp's final moonlight sing. "Beast" connotes no element of danger as Welty uses the term, but does increase the night's indefinability and encourages a variety of imaginative representations, for he (the night) has "no shine of outline" and is visible only through his ornaments--the "rings, earrings" which are the stars (359). These ornaments/stars--distant and multiple--contrast with the bonfire around which the girls sing. It forms "a bright point to look into" (359), a bright, singular "core" which they can use as a centering point. By contrast, the multiple images of fireflies, stars, and moon combine to form the "beast in gossamer": if the girls can open their

consciousness to him, allow the night to enter into them, they can experience an expansion of vision and of identity.

All around swam the fireflies. Clouds of them, trees of them, islands of them floating, a lower order of brightness--one could even get into a tent by mistake. The stars barely showed their places in the pale sky--small and far from this bright world. And the world would be bright as long as these girls held awake, and could keep their eyes from closing. And the moon itself shone--taken for granted. (359)

The fireflies, which replicate the multiplicity of the stars and come closer than stars to earth, are multiple points of fire--moving, not static; varying, not constant; forming and exchanging shapes in the night sky: they are first clouds, then trees, then islands.

Ultimately, however, Nina regards only Easter as having the strength of identity to permit such otherness to come near to her, to enter "wholly into the tent" (362). To Nina, Easter not only allows, she beckons the night and all that he contains--mystery, sexuality, otherness, range, and movement--an infinite fullness of identity. The sexual imagery Nina uses to describe the encounter suggests that she envisions such openness to otherness as a very intimate intercourse, a fluidity of exchange which enables self and other to become "one flesh."

The pondering night stood rude at the tent door, the opening fold would let it stoop in--it, him--he had risen up inside. Long-armed, or long-legged, he stood in the center there where the pole went up. Nina lay back, drawn quietly from him. But the night knew about Easter. All about her. Geneva had pushed her to the very edge of the cot. Easter's hand hung down, opened outward. Come here, night, Easter might say, tender to a

giant, to such a dark thing. And the night,
 obedient and graceful, would kneel to her.
 Easter's callused hand hung open, there to the
 night that had got wholly into the tent. (361-62)

Easter's active dreaming here, during her
 resuscitation, and at siesta (or, more to the point, the
 fact that Nina imagines Easter's "sleeping" states as open
 and responsive encounters) seems similar to Cixous'
 description of woman's wandering. "She wanders," Cixous
 says, "but lying down. In dream. Ruminates. Talks to
 herself. Woman's voyage: as a body" (Cixous and Clement
 66--emphasis in original).

Though Patricia Yaeger also reads this scene as
 illustrative of Easter's strength of identity, she comes to
 this conclusion from quite a different angle. Yaeger argues
 that Easter demonstrates her power over a male "other" which
 threatens to re-define her ("Dangling Signifier" 445). Yet
 the night is never presented as a threatening figure to
Easter (though he is to Nina), nor does Easter seem to
 control him--their meeting is described as mutually open.
 Yaeger also ignores the imagery used to describe the night,
 which is expansive, free, and multiple--remote from the
 definition Yaeger sees the night as imposing.

Yet the process which is natural and graceful for
 Easter is difficult and frightening for Nina, though it is a
 transition she desperately wants to make. In the same
 scene, just prior to the night's entrance into the tent,
 Nina lies awake contemplating the change and fluidity

available to her--a fluidity of identity which flows beyond the limitations of convention, age, race, even gender.

The orphan! she thought exultantly. The other way to live. There were secret ways. She thought, Time's really short, I've been only thinking like the others. It's only interesting, only worthy, to try for the fiercest secrets. To slip into them all--to change. To change for a moment into Gertrude, into Mrs. Gruenwald, into Twosie--into a boy. To have been an orphan. (361--emphasis in original)

Significantly, Nina gazes at first "passionately" at the night which she imagines looks in upon her (361); yet as he approaches, Nina "draw[s] quietly from him" and the hand that she offers to him in imitation of Easter, though as desirous, is not as willing, as is shown by her "shrinking." Her gesture may be the same, but the identity which offers the hand is not. "Its gesture was like Easter's, but Easter's hand slept and her own hand knew--shrank and knew, yet offered still. 'Instead . . . me instead . . .'" (362).

In sleep, Easter's hand is more conscious than Nina's is in waking: while Easter was on the table, unconscious after her fall, still she could keep one arm extended and the other under her, clutching her withheld self "jealously . . . as if a secret handful had been groveled for" (371). The different gestures of Easter's two hands, in fact, show Easter's ability to use both openness (in the hand extended outward) and a retained, unknowable sense of self (in the hand guarded and kept from view) to add to her identity. By contrast, Nina by morning has withdrawn her once-extended

hand, suggesting that she is not capable of simultaneous possibilities as is Easter. Moreover, the hand which is under her body grasps nothing, but in fact is wholly unconscious, even numb. "At reveille she woke up lying on it. She could not move it. She hit it and bit it until like a cluster of bees it stung back and came to life" (362). Nina's retraction of her once-extended hand hints at her fear of such openness. The next day, in fact, Nina faints at the sight of Easter's proffered hand during her resuscitation, knowing then fully the risks of openness to otherness (369).

Yet as terrifying as Easter's resuscitation is to Nina, still she struggles to confront and comprehend it. While the others tire of focusing on Easter, Nina continues to watch intently, trying both to understand Easter's identity and to appropriate its multiple expressions for herself. A small moment dedicated to Nina's response illustrates a part of her process. Looking down, Nina notices "three little shells in the sand" (370); these expand into a vision of the future, when she will pick up an endless array of shells, unlimited by time and not dependent upon Easter's example or influence any longer. "And suddenly this seemed to her one of those moments out of the future, just as she had found one small brief one out of the past; this was far, far ahead of her--picking up the shells, one, another, another, without time moving any more (370--emphases mine). Although

this is of course an idealistic vision, still it provides the possibility of a fuller, more expansive identity for Nina in the future.

As Nina walks back to camp after Easter is revived, some of this potential identity takes shape within her: "with each step she felt a defiance of her own" (372). Shouting Easter's name and running to get nearer to her, Nina senses a gathering of her thoughts, a multiplicitous mixture of contradictions and connections. Though Easter remains at least partially a mystery to Nina, still she is a felt mystery, and Nina's exposure to her is certainly not without its effect.

In that passionate instant, when they reached Easter and took her up, many feelings returned to Nina, some joining and some conflicting. At least what had happened to Easter was out in the world, like the table itself. There it remained--mystery, if only for being hard and cruel and, by something Nina felt inside her body, murderous. (372--emphases mine)

If "Moon Lake" were the last view we received of Nina, we could legitimately assume that she might one day possess fully for herself the non-restricted sense of self, the openness to alterability and difference she now admires in Easter. Yet, in the one further glimpse we get of Nina, in "The Wanderers," over twenty years into the future, Nina shows no signs of the independence, non-conventionality, or range that are so well-developed in Easter by her mid-teens. Though Nina tacitly concurs with Jinny Love's declaration at the end of "Moon Lake" that "'You and I will always be old

maids'" (374), both for the personal autonomy and freedom from male dominance such a decision would imply and for the avoidance of sexual initiation it would allow, by her mid-thirties Nina is married, pregnant, and seated at Katie's visitation where her father-in-law "[can] see her" (433), under his surveillance and evidently in need of being cheered up (434). Ironically, Nina marries into the very family--the Nesbitts--who through their lumber business are systematically destroying the woods that in "Moon Lake" are associated with female freedom, expansiveness, and multiplicity.

Jinny Love has perhaps a more predictable story. In "The Whole World Knows" it is revealed that she is married to Ran MacLain, though separated from him because of an affair she has with Woody Spights. Though her affair could be interpreted as Jinny Love's effort to multiply her pleasure, both it and her indifferent response to Ran instead seem to be the result of the same belief in her singular self-importance which motivated her as a child. Jinny Love no longer avoids sexuality because it is frightening, as she did in "Moon Lake," yet neither does she now seem to view it as enriching, as creating connection, or as adding to her pleasure. Instead, Jinny Love uses sex as a childish, manipulative tactic, a divisive force. In this area and others, the years bring her not maturity but regression: "Jinny, who in childhood had seemed more

knowing than her years, was in her thirties strangely childlike; was it old perversity or further tactics?" (444)

By "The Wanderers," when Jinny Love is in her thirties, unhappily re-united with Ran and with a household of children, she seems quite different from the girl who boldly asserted her intent to remain single. Rather, she bases her conception of female identity upon very conventional measurements: beauty and marriageability. She looks at Virgie's rough and scarred hands disapprovingly, "making them stigmata of something at odds in her womanhood" (444). And, though she herself is dissatisfied with marriage, she believes firmly in its propriety. Though urging Virgie to marry, she is "grimacing out of the iron mask of the married lady. It appeared urgent with her to drive everybody . . . into the state of marriage along with her. Only then could she resume as Jinny Love Stark, her true self" (444-45). The fact that she considers her "true self" to be Jinny Love Stark, rather than MacLain, her married name, further establishes her dissatisfaction with the very institution she so adamantly--and hypocritically--upholds.

Neither of these two women, then, ultimately gives expression to even a fraction of the range and multiple possibilities or receptivity to otherness which Easter enjoys. Only in Virgie Rainey, the principal character of both "June Recital" and "The Wanderers," does Easter have a kindred spirit. Nina seems more akin to Cassie Morrison,

who appears in these same works, for Cassie is drawn to Virgie's ranging and continually shifting identity in the same way that Nina is fascinated by Easter's, yet she, like Nina, is ultimately unable to possess this plurality for herself.

It is through Cassie's consciousness that Parts II and IV of "June Recital" are related. From her room Cassie observes the activities which are going on in the now-abandoned MacLain house next door while her brother Loch, from whose perspective Parts I and III are told, watches also from his window. Upstairs in the MacLain house, Virgie Rainey is having sex with Bucky Moffit; in the parlor below, Miss Eckhart, Cassie and Virgie Rainey's old piano teacher, is preparing a final recital of her own, which she intends to culminate by burning down the house. Other characters gradually enter the house, including King MacLain, appearing between disappearances, but these are mostly for comic effect. Welty's primary focus is unquestionably upon Miss Eckhart and Virgie Rainey.

Loch's and Cassie's perspectives and situations contrast sharply, revealing fundamental differences in their identities. In "Moon Lake," in which he is perhaps a year or two older than in "June Recital," Loch is associated with wildness, separateness, and range; the same connections are made here, but now he exhibits these qualities in conjunction with the MacLain house rather than the woods.

Loch, because he has malaria, is confined to his bed, yet he defies parental limitations, not only leaving his bed but leaning through an open window and eventually escaping through it to hang upside down in a tree close to the window of the room in which Virgie and Bucky Moffit lie (284). Elaine Pugh also emphasizes Loch's participation in the neighboring action, in contrast to Cassie's rather passive observation of it from her window (438). Loch describes the house as containing and reflecting the expanse and freedom of nature--the parlor window is "clear and dark as a pool he knew in the river" (276), a framed picture inside "reflect[s] the light outdoors and the flight of birds between branches of trees" (276), and the gutter during rainy season is as "splashy as a waterfall in a forest" (277). Loch imagines himself "living next door, wild as a cowboy, absolutely by himself" (276) and delights in the openness of the house, the fluidity with which people can move in and out: "[S]uppose doors with locks and keys were ever locked--then nothing like this would have the chance to happen. The nearness of missing things, and the possibility of preventing them, made Loch narrow his eyes" (281). Clearly Loch hates locks and their inhibition and closure.

Across the hall from Loch in a room purposely "locked," with a sign attached to the door forbidding anyone to enter, Cassie is "shut up" (386). Her window remains closed, and her glances out of it are furtive and uneasy (286). Far

from seeing the MacLain house as open and full of life, Cassie regards it as "bare . . . exposed and . . . lonesome" (285); she is bothered by the movement and activity that she only vaguely senses: it brings change and a risky instability, Cassie believes.

Yet in the shade of the vacant house, though all looked still, there was agitation. Some life stirred through. . . . Ever since the MacLains had moved away, that roof had stood (and leaked) over the heads of people who did not really stay, and a restless current seemed to flow dark and free around it (there would be some sound or motion to startle the birds), a life quicker than the Morrisons' life, more driven probably, thought Cassie uneasily. (286)

Cassie fears the capacity which enables Loch to view the house's openness, change, movement, and variability as positive. Thus, she herself imposes restriction upon her life to provide herself with a sense of stability and order. Even the style of her narration, as Elaine Pugh points out, is orderly, in contrast to Loch's "impressionistic" telling of events (438). What she is doing inside her closed room is a kind of metaphor for her self-imposed limitation and its eventual effect: "tie-and-dye" (286). Cassie tediously knots strings around sections of a scarf, meticulously dipping the knots into different dishes of dye in order to produce a scarf which will be forbidden and "out-of-uniform" when she goes off to college in a few months (287). This is the activity which preoccupies her so much that she has no time to share Loch's vision of what is going on outside her stuffy, closed quarters. When Loch shouts that he has

something to show her, Cassie impatiently calls back, "'I ain't got time!'" (287) Cassie takes great pains to avoid being stained by the beautiful colors which surround her, metaphorically showing her resistance to the spectrum of identity available to her, yet "in spite of reasonable care," "a little of each color of the rainbow drop[s] on her" (287). Loch views the colored spots as transforming, as though Cassie has slipped into a different identity altogether. "She had been dressed up for whatever she was doing in her room like somebody in the circus, with colored spots on her, and hardly looked like his sister" (279--emphases mine). Cassie herself seems to recognize, but does not embrace, the possibilities suggested by the scarf, for she imagines both Virgie and Miss Eckhart, the two characters most associated with fullness and mutability of identity, wearing it; still, she is frightened by this prospect, possessive of the scarf, and intent on preserving it untouched by these influences--it is hers alone, singular and solitary.

There was the scarf. It was an old friend, part enemy. She brought it to her face, touched her lips to it, breathed its smoky dye-smell, and passed it up her cheeks and over her eyes. She pressed it against her forehead. She might have lost it, might have run out with it . . . for she had visions of poor Miss Eckhart wearing it away over her head; of Virgie waving it, brazenly, in the air of the street; of too-knowing Jinny Love Stark asking, 'Couldn't you keep it?' (328)

The scarf, like Cassie's potential for a more colorful, expansive identity, will remain locked up, put away and never worn.

Although Cassie seems aware of her identity's limitations and is in fact herself responsible for some of her inhibitions, still she is not content with her self, but wants to see herself differently, to move her self into a fuller identity which she associates with the past, poetry, current, and most importantly, music. She thus does not completely embody the conventional female point of view as Louise Westling contends, but at points moves beyond that definition (Welty 137). She would like to see herself as "favored and happy" yet the internal view she has of her "uncritical self of the crucial present" is inconsistent with that desire. She is only a "small, solemn, unprotected figure . . . standing scared at the window[.] . . . she stood there pathetic--homeless-looking--horrible" (287). When she hears Fur Elise being played on the piano next door, therefore, she has not the strength to flow with the "restless current [which] seem[s] to flow dark and free" around the MacLain house (286), the current which contains the past, poetry, movement, and music which is so integral to her memories. Unlike Easter of "Moon Lake," Josie of "The Winds," Mrs. Larkin of "A Curtain of Green," or even Clytie, Cassie is not sent on a voyage towards more expansive female possibilities by the wave which comes, but

drowns instead. "Like a wave, the gathering past came right up to her. Next time it would be too high. The poetry was all around her, pellucid and lifting from side to side[.] . . . Then the wave moved up, towered, and came drowning down over her stuck-up head" (287).

Another image which shows both Cassie's desire for a fuller range of being and experience, the beauty and mobility these could provide for her identity, and her inability to grasp all this for herself is the hummingbird which appears at her window. In the bird, which is small and frail like herself, yet which contains and enjoys the fullness she cannot, Cassie sees a wonderful plurality. A composite of contradictions--"metallic and misty together," darting yet "suspended," "fairy-like" and real--the bird, to Cassie, possesses a full complement of identity, a capacity Cassie admires and yearns for, yet an ability that remains--through her own hesitancy--beyond her.

Music and those from the past Cassie associates with it, however, most effectively illustrate Cassie's struggle with and against multiplicity. It is music--the repeated strain of Fur Elise--that initiates her flood of memories and plants in her mind fragments of a poem ("Song of the Wandering Aengus," appropriately) which remain with her throughout the story. It is Virgie and Miss Eckhart who possess the passion and intensity of music--an emotional pitch which frightens and stirs Cassie. Ironically, it is

Cassie who receives a scholarship to study music and it is she who devotes her life to teaching the art; yet what is merely skill in her is feeling and power in Virgie and Miss Eckhart: never does Cassie allow herself to be overwhelmed by the fullness and range of music. In her forties, Cassie confides to Virgie that the only music in her house is that played by her students, implying that she herself no longer plays (457).

Even Loch, who apparently has had no musical training, is far more responsive to music's influence than is Cassie. As Loch hears the opening bars of Fur Elise, he is touched, almost literally, by the music, and allows it to carry him beyond the boundaries of his present moment and identity.

The tune came again, like a touch from a small hand that he had unwittingly pushed away. Loch lay back and let it persist. All at once tears rolled out of his eyes. He opened his mouth in astonishment. Then the little tune seemed the only thing in the whole day, the whole summer . . . that was accountable: it was personal. . . . It took him back to when his sister was so sweet, to a long time ago. To when they loved each other in a different world, a boundless, trustful country all its own, . . . different altogether from his solitary world now. (280)

Not only can Loch experience the movement, fullness, and emotion of the music, but he can convey it as well. Although Cassie calls his childhood attempts at music "noise" and claims that he was so tone deaf or musically inept that "he didn't know one tune from another" (315), Loch nevertheless nurtures a feel for music. It is appropriate that Loch describes Fur Elise as coming across

the air "like a signal, or a greeting--the kind of thing a horn would play out in the woods" (280), for some summers later he himself is producing that passion. In "Moon Lake," Loch "play[s] taps for them, invisibly then, and so beautifully they wept together, whole tentfuls some nights" (343).

Cassie, however, both loves and shuts out music's power and expansive possibilities, frightened by its potential for uncontrollable intensity and passion. The most graphic example of Cassie's rejection of music's identity-enlarging possibilities is given in a scene which combines a violent summer rain storm (the torrents which in the bedroom episode drown Cassie) with Miss Eckhart's rapturous piano playing. Cassie remembers being stranded in Miss Eckhart's studio by the sudden storm, listening almost in panic to the music which "burst[s] out, unwanted, exciting, from the wrong person's [Miss Eckhart's] life" (301). Significantly, she stares at the safe on the wall, which becomes her lighthouse in the storm, to avoid being pulled in by the music.

The music was too much for Cassie Morrison. . . .
 She stood back in the room with her whole body
 averted as if to ward off blows from Miss
 Eckhart's strong left hand, her eyes on the
 faintly winking circle of the safe in the wall.
 (301)

To take her mind off the "violence" of the music, Cassie begins thinking about an incident in which Miss Eckhart was reportedly raped by a black man. Astonishingly, this thought is less troubling to her, less violent in her

mind, than the music Miss Eckhart plays. That Cassie would regard Miss Eckhart's music as in some sense more ravaging than rape reveals something of the extent and nature of Cassie's fears regarding an unrestrained expression of identity. To her it represents a violent, uncontrollable force which has more potential than rape to disrupt her deepest sense of identity.

Another aspect which almost certainly contributes to Cassie's terror is the way in which Miss Eckhart's music compels her to identify with Miss Eckhart, to share in her emotion, and to be a part of her Otherness. It reveals a bit of Cassie's potential for a more mutable self that she is able to experience Otherness so intimately--an ability taught her by Virgie (298)--but her rejection of this fluidity of identity shows her overriding desire to maintain a sameness and unity of identity. The ability to identify so closely with an/other, as Cassie points out, is frightening, and increases her risk of feeling pain, especially when the Other is so close as to nearly be experienced as part of her self.

She found it so easy--ever since Virgie showed her--to feel terror and pain in an outsider; in someone you did not know at all well, pain made you wonderfully sorry. It was not so easy to be sorry about it in the people close to you--it came unwillingly; and how strange--in yourself . . . pain--even a moment's pain--seemed inconceivable. (298)

Remembering one of Snowdie MacLain's boarders, Mr. Voight, who terrifies Cassie because he flaps his housecoat

during Miss Eckhart's piano lessons, exposing himself in order to stop the lessons, Cassie reflects that "[s]he could not now, any more than then, really describe Mr. Voight, but without thinking she could be Mr. Voight, which was more frightening still" (296). With such a capacity for incorporating otherness into her self, it is understandable that Cassie at times works for distance, stability, and singularity.

To avoid the risks of experiencing Otherness, Cassie attempts to rigidly define others. By confining them to certain definitions, Cassie hopes to limit the range of their identities, to contain their strangeness, and to establish them as solid and immutable in their identities, making it impossible for her to identify with them, for her identity to penetrate theirs. Thus Cassie desperately tries to describe the face Mr. Voight makes when he exposes himself: to define it would be to keep him unique and to objectify him.

Cassie does the same with Miss Eckhart, who also frightens her. "[I]f she was not a teacher, what was Miss Eckhart?" Cassie declares (294), limiting her to one role and denying her the many other identities she knows Miss Eckhart to have--the multiple identities that are freed when Miss Eckhart plays and which threaten the singular, solid self that Cassie is trying to construct. At one point in the story, Cassie seems to regret the limitations and

definitions placed upon Miss Eckhart by her and others and thinks that "somewhere, even up to the last, there could have been for Miss Eckhart a little opening wedge--a crack in the door" (308) that leads both to their acceptance of her and to a richer range of possibility for Miss Eckhart. Yet Cassie must admit that "if I had been the one to see it open . . . I might have slammed it tight for ever. I might" (308).

By the end of the story, however, when Cassie recognizes that it is Miss Eckhart who had been playing Fur Elise next door and that it is she who is being led away, captive, by the men who thwarted her fire, Cassie does not shut the door on Miss Eckhart, but opens one to her. Rushing out her door wearing only her petticoat, Cassie exposes both her outward and her inward self for Miss Eckhart's sake, for it is "in full awareness" that she protests their taking Miss Eckhart away (324). Moreover, when a group of women who witness not only Miss Eckhart's departure but also Virgie's escape from the house begin to identify and place Virgie's lover, Cassie mentally resists their definition. It is the only time in the entire collection that Cassie allows herself to be surprised by another person's identity, to take pleasure in indefinability and not to diminish his or her range of being.

And nobody else was surprised at anything--it was only we two [Loch and herself]. People saw things like this as they saw Mr. MacLain come and go.

They only hoped to place them, in their hour or their street or the name of their mothers' people. Then Morgana could hold them, and at last they were this and they were that. (325)

Cassie experiences with Virgie also the same vacillation between defending herself against Otherness and wanting to open herself to difference. When Katie Rainey, for example, declares her desire that Virgie have a sister and by touching Cassie seems to designate her as that sister, Cassie is filled with "pure terror" (313) at the prospect of sharing Virgie's passion, a passion she again associates with violence. After Virgie finishes playing her final recital piece, Cassie describes Virgie's dishevelled and ravaged appearance: "the red of the sash was all over the front of her waist, she was wet and stained as if she had been stabbed in the heart" (313). Yet the sweat which runs down Virgie's face is to Cassie "enviable" (313).

Two years later, as Cassie "edge[s] back to the window" to sneak a look at Virgie's lovemaking in the house next door, the same struggle is apparent in her (286). She hopes that she will not see Virgie because she fears the passion which she may witness, yet she also "especially" hopes that Virgie will not see her. This desire to go unnoticed may not simply be a dread of being caught spying, but may also indicate the contrast Cassie sees between her identity and Virgie's. Her weak, "unprotected," self (287) pales even further under the gaze of Virgie, whose assertive self is its own protection. Ultimately, Cassie believes that she

cannot bridge the gap which exists between their two identities, though she is drawn to Virgie's freedom and multiplicity.

Elaine Pugh acknowledges that in some ways Cassie is "most genuinely [Virgie's] opposite," yet also recognizes that in Cassie is the "latent potential" for what Virgie possesses in full--the ability to open herself to change, mobility, otherness, and variety (448). Pugh's view runs counter to Marilyn Arnold's claim that "Cassie wants none of the fire, none of the quest" (64) and recognizes Cassie's concomitant fear and desire for what she sees embodied in Virgie.

Loch literally bridges the gap between Virgie and himself when he crawls through his window to hang from a tree outside Virgie's window. His "spread-eagled back in the white night drawers seem[s] as far from [Cassie] as the morning star" (315), and though she desires that star's gleam for herself--while watching him, she plays "'By the light, light, light, light, light, light of the silvery moon,' her favorite song" (316)--Cassie will not allow herself to slip into their identities to increase her own range of being.

She could never go for herself, never creep out on the shimmering bridge of the tree, or reach the dark magnet there that drew you inside, kept drawing you in. She could not see herself do an unknown thing. She was not Loch, she was not Virgie Rainey; she was not her mother. She was Cassie in her room, seeing the knowledge and torment beyond her reach, standing at her window singing. (316--emphases mine)

Cassie is no more successful in achieving connection with Virgie nearly thirty years later, but in fact less so, as is symbolically shown in her driving parallel to Virgie as Virgie prepares to leave town. "[T]heir lives," Pugh remarks, "have run such a course, apart and yet together, toward similar ends" (448). In "The Wanderers" Cassie seeks identification with Virgie through their shared experience of losing their mothers. "'Let me sit by you, Virgie,'" Cassie says, "'You know I know what it's like'" (432). Yet the empathy she claims to feel is less a sharing of Virgie's grief than it is a re-living of her own. Cassie dwells with death, Virgie with life; there is very little overlap between their lives or identities. Though Virgie's mother Katie has only been dead a day, Virgie has already released her, accepted her movement from life; many years after her mother's death, Cassie still tries to preserve their relationship, still in some ways the same insecure little girl who feared her mother's abandonment (298, 299, 312). Cassie now maintains her mother's reality by "writing" her name in flowers--"Mama's Name in the Spring" (456)--and assures her constant presence (and confinement) by bordering the name twice, with hyacinthus and then violets, "'to tell me where it is in summer!'" (457) Patricia Yaeger insightfully comments that the flower bed is Cassie's attempt to "bring her mother back into the communal garden; she does not allow Catherine Morrison to have a plot of her

own even in death" ("Dialogic Imagination" 579). Plot, of course, has a double meaning here, for Mrs. Morrison's life (and death) lacks a plot of her own inscription.

Permanence and security are essential to Cassie's relationships and to her sense of self; she cannot imagine "a life of [her] own, away," though she admires and envies the possibility for others: "'You'll go away like Loch,' Cassie called from the steps. 'A life of your own, away-- I'm so glad for people like you and Loch, I am really'" (457--emphasis mine).

What was true for Cassie at age sixteen, in her closed, lonely room--walking among beautiful colors but touching none--is also true for her in her forties. The realm of poetry, music, fluidity, and fire can be felt, but only fleetingly; can touch, but not remain; and "the face that was in the poem"--her own multiplicitous identity--can be seen only in her dreams.

Into her head flowed the whole of the poem she had found in that book. It ran perfectly through her head, vanishing as it went, one line yielding to the next, like a torch race. All of it passed through her head, through her body. She slept, but sat up in bed once and said aloud, "'Because a fire was in my head.'" Then she fell back unresisting. She did not see except in dreams that a face looked in; that it was the grave, unappeased, and radiant face, once more and always, the face that was in the poem. (330--emphases mine)

The line of poetry which Cassie quotes as she wakes from her dream is from Yeats' "Song of the Wandering Aengus," and the face she sees is no doubt purposely

undelineated by Welty so that it can potentially refer to both the glimmering girl which the Aengus pursues and the Aengus himself. In her wonderfully evocative article, "'Because a Fire Was in My Head': Eudora Welty and the Dialogic Imagination," Patricia Yaeger persuasively argues that Welty re-works Yeats' poem to give equal voice to the female character and to give a "male mythos" her own meanings (565, 562). According to Yaeger, Welty's use of the poem shows how myth can stimulate female imagination (567).

The poem is presented as being in Cassie's head, and throughout "June Recital" Cassie remembers fragments of the poem, expropriating Yeats' original to describe her own identity and the identities of other female characters who participate in or yearn for the passion and wandering spirit expressed in the poem. Yaeger suggests that Welty evokes both protagonists of the poem, but makes even the male Aengus represent an aspect of female identity. "If at times Welty's female characters resemble the passive, mysterious figure of the glimmering girl whom Yeats portrays as the object of man's desire, in other moments they resemble the ostensible subject of Yeats's poem, the Aengus, in their imagination and their desires" (573). The ambiguity of the face Cassie sees in her dreams also combines the subject and object of Yeats' poem and associates Cassie with both possibilities. If Cassie seems more often to appropriate

the image of the glimmering girl for herself, still she expresses a desire for the subjective freedom of the Aengus.

Cassie seems to have inherited this desire for fuller female possibility from her mother, for throughout The Golden Apples there are glimmers of Mrs. Morrison's yearnings for wider range of identity. Neither mother nor daughter, however, possesses the range, variety, and mutability that, for example, Virgie does. Cassie limits her potential for growth and change because she fears the otherness and boundlessness with which she may be confronted. Mrs. Morrison's more eager receptivity to expanded possibilities for her self is stifled by the rigid social structures and roles she is caught within and by her stern, proper husband, who is the antithesis in many ways to Mrs. Morrison's openness.

Unlike Cassie, then, Mrs. Morrison does not struggle with a multiplicity that simultaneously fascinates and frightens her, but fights to preserve the fullness and openness of her identity. She does not, for example, seek to reconcile the oppositions and contradictions within her, but instead "show[s] no repentance, such as Cassie [feels], for her inconsistencies" (295).

As is true of Miss Eckhart, Virgie, and even her daughter Cassie, Mrs. Morrison's alterability and love of freedom and range is best shown in its metaphoric connection with music. Mrs. Morrison herself affirms her association

with music when she assures a much younger Loch that he will one day be able to play music--"'Why, of course, dear heart. You're my child'" (315--emphasis in original). Mrs. Morrison never actually plays or sings throughout The Golden Apples; it is clear that hers is an "unheard melody," an inner music that has its own rhythms, variations, and movements. Thus, Mrs. Morrison, like Virgie, hates the unimaginative regularity of Miss Eckhart's metronome and wants more improvisation, creativity, and freedom of movement in her music as in her identity. "'Mercy, you have to keep moving, with that infernal machine. I want a song to dip'" (293). When Cassie asks if her mother could have played the piano, Mrs. Morrison replies, "'Child, I could have sung,' and she threw her hand from her, as though all music might as well now go jump off the bridge" (293). Both the subjunctive mood used in Mrs. Morrison's reply and Cassie's ignorance of her mother's musical interest indicate the degree to which Mrs. Morrison has been inhibited in her full expression of multiplicity, yet her dramatic response also suggests the fire and drive which still remain.

Mrs. Morrison's multiplicity is also revealed in her wandering spirit, which illustrates her desire for a larger range of possibilities for her self. At one point in the story, Loch sees her as "a glimmer at the foot of his bed" and Cassie as "a lesser but similar gleam, go[ing] past his door" (328), an equation of his mother with the distant

range, fire, and multiplicity of stars and a realization that Cassie does not participate as fully in that force. Loch himself, as was shown earlier, is considered a bright star by Cassie, who admires his ability to "creep out on the shimmering bridge of the tree" (316). Cassie attributes the same ability to her mother, the ability to "do an unknown thing," to "reach the dark magnet there that drew you inside, kept drawing you in" (316). Her mother joins Loch and Virgie in Cassie's mind in having this mobility, this willingness to experience more (316).

Certainly Mrs. Morrison encourages this same freedom in her daughter. "[A]gainst their father's will, slipped out by their mother's connivance" (276), Cassie goes on the moonlight hay rides with her friends.

Nearly every image associated with the hayrides--"the singing, the moon and stars and the moving roof of leaves, Moon Lake brimming and the boat on it" (329)--is (in this text and elsewhere) used by Welty to suggest a fullness of female identity, a multiplicitous range of being. Ironically, Mrs. Morrison is more open than the daughter she sneaks out to the expansiveness suggested through these images. Nightly, the MacLain boys call to Mrs. Morrison to join them, despite their age differences, somehow recognizing in her the same roaming spirit that they themselves possess. (And surely their nicknames, Ran and Scooter, identify them both as wanderers.) Cassie, by

contrast, does join them, yet keeps herself separate, untouched by the fullness offered her: "she herself had let nobody touch even her hand" (329).

Cassie depends far too much upon boundaries and definitions for the stability of her identity ever to feel at ease with unrestricted wandering. Neither can she bear it in her mother. Dependent upon her mother to provide security for her, Cassie panics if her mother moves beyond a certain range. At political speakings, "no matter how slightly [Cassie] strayed . . . when she got back to their place her mother would be gone" (298). Though Cassie's youth can partially explain her need for stability, the fact that she never "outgrows" this need but becomes more dependent upon boundaries suggests that predictability and security are deep identity needs for Cassie. As Mrs. Morrison points out, however, it is Cassie, not she, who is "lost" when Mrs. Morrison wanders, and it is Cassie who has the larger liberty to move beyond boundaries, since Mrs. Morrison ultimately has the restrictions of marriage, motherhood, and social propriety to keep her within range. "'It's you that vanishes, Lady Bug,'" says Mrs. Morrison, "you that gets away" (298--emphasis mine).

Perhaps partially because of her desire for relationality, Mrs. Morrison is drawn into the social life of Morgana; rather than being a positive influence, however, these enclosing circles of women gradually choke out Mrs.

Morrison's individuality and restrict her range of identity. Loch, for example, notes that when his mother, who is distinct as a star while at the foot of his bed, joins the "lackadaisical, fluttery kind of parade" of Morgana women going to an afternoon Rook party, her identity is "absorbed into their floating, transparent colors" (280). Appropriately, the clicking of their heels upon the sidewalk drowns out the sound of the music Miss Eckhart plays in the house next door; just as daintily, they stamp out Mrs. Morrison's multiplicity.

This subtle but felt depletion is apparent in Mrs. Morrison's description to Loch of the party refreshments (328). Ridiculously elaborate and tediously designed, the decorated pickles, swan-shaped cream puffs, and hollowed out oranges show the triviality of the women's preoccupations, and the miniaturized portions assure that they cannot satisfy. Patricia Yaeger adds that the canapes illustrate "the permissible range of feminine creativity" ("Dialogic Imagination" 579). When Loch asks his mother if she was hungry at the party and she does not answer but only watches the swallows glide through the darkening sky, it is clear that her hunger is not for these "delicacies" but for the music and motion of the swallows: even their name suggests that they can be satiated while she cannot.

Most destructive of her multiplicity, however, is Mrs. Morrison's relationship with her husband. Throughout the

stories of The Golden Apples, Mrs. Morrison is referred to only as Mrs. Morrison, allowing her only her married identity; not until years after her death is her given name (Catherine) revealed, written in flowers by her daughter (457). No other woman in the collection is exclusively referred to in this way. All others are addressed by their first names at least occasionally; several--though married--are referred to by their maiden names, and all but Mrs. Morrison are frequently given the southern title of "Miss" without respect to their marital status. Mrs. Morrison's "distinction" in this respect perhaps points out the weight of her role as wife upon her personal identity. Mrs. Morrison does not discard her outward roles, for they are a visible part of her identity, yet her identity goes far beyond these definitions and includes aspects which would be, if known, incomprehensible to her husband. Mr. Morrison demands a strict continuity between inward and outward selves, a singularity of identity that contains no surprise or variety. "If there was anything that unsettled him it was for people not to be on the inside what their outward semblances led you to suppose" (327). Mrs. Morrison, however, delights in unpredictability and change, believing that these augment rather than destroy identity. When Booney Holifield does not "live up to" his definition as a "public guardian" by sleeping through the fire Miss Eckhart sets, for example, Mrs. Morrison enjoys the contradiction.

"Their mother laughed. 'That old monkey,' she said. As far as she was concerned, the old man next door had just come alive, redeemed himself a little from being a Holifield" (327).

Though no details are given of the process, Mrs. Morrison's identity unquestionably falls victim to her husband's rigidity. The light of her identity gradually darkens and loses its fluidity, becoming a solid, depthless silhouette to her husband and for him, taking his shape.

Her mother's laugh, which followed, was as usual soft and playful but not illuminating. Her laugh, like the morning light that came in the window each summer breakfast time around her father's long head, slowly made it its solid silhouette where he sat against the day. (295--emphases mine)

No one expects it when, "[a]fter being so gay and flighty always, Cassie's mother went out of the room one morning and killed herself" (449); no one knows her well enough to recognize her struggle, though Virgie's comment that she died in "'[p]ain a plenty'" (455) perhaps suggests her empathy with a woman who shared so deeply her own desire for expansiveness and growth. Virgie, however, is far more successful than Mrs. Morrison in achieving these. In fact, Virgie is of all Welty's characters the most fulfilled, the strongest possessor of plurality. Speaking of Virgie's character in One Writer's Beginning, Welty writes,

She is powerfully like Miss Eckhart, her co-equal in stubborn and passionate feeling, while more expressive of it--but fully apart from me. And as Miss Eckhart's powers shrink and fade away, the young Virgie grows up more rampant, and struggles

into some sort of life independent from all the rest. . . . Passionate, recalcitrant, stubbornly undefeated by failure or hurt or disgrace or bereavement, all the while heedlessly wasting of her gifts, she knows to the last that there is a world that remains out there, a world living and mysterious, and that she is of it. (111)

Virgie's story is given in "June Recital" and "The Wanderers." In the former, her relationship with Miss Eckhart, her piano teacher and a woman who shares Virgie's inner fire, is described. To ignore Miss Eckhart would be to present an incomplete portrait of Virgie, yet Miss Eckhart does not exist as a character simply to delineate Virgie. Miss Eckhart's identity has its own remarkable scope and variety and these exist independent of Virgie's self though they are augmented and enriched through her connection with Virgie.

By outward appearances, Miss Eckhart seems the very antithesis of Virgie's spirited self. She is physically described as "round and solid, her back a ramrod" (299), and her strict, rigid behavior reinforces the portrait of her as unyielding. From her habit of swatting flies on pupils' hands as they play the piano to her meticulously-kept accounts and her strange, distracted method of teaching, Miss Eckhart does not seem to possess any of the fluidity of identity or expansiveness so easily apparent in Virgie. Yet in her own ways, she too has an incredible range to her identity, a capacity for change, growth, and different expressions of her self. Her nonconformity, independence,

strong will, and refusal to be defined enable her fullness of identity.

Not a native of Morgana or of any world familiar to the community, Miss Eckhart is immediately set apart as foreign and unknowable: "Where did Miss Eckhart come from, and where in the end did she go? In Morgana most destinies were known to everybody and seemed to go without saying. . . . And Miss Eckhart had gone down out of sight" (308). Worse, while in Morgana she does not do as the Morganians do, but preserves her Otherness, having no regard for southern conventions for women and rejecting societal expectations.

. . . if Miss Eckhart had allowed herself to be called by her first name, then she would have been like other ladies. Or if Miss Eckhart had belonged to a church that had ever been heard of, and the ladies would have had something to invite her to belong to . . . Or if she had been married to anybody at all, just the awfulest man--like Miss Snowdie MacLain, that everybody could feel sorry for. (308)

Years later, Loch also recognizes her continued nonconformity, her indifference to the conventions which could define her as a southern lady. Watching her as she approaches the MacLain house and contrasting her with the fluttering ladies on their way to their Rook party, Loch remarks, "Here came an old lady. No, she was an old woman . . . not on her way to a party. Something besides countriness gave her her look. Maybe it came from her having nothing in her hands, no reticule or fan" (281).

Appropriately, however, as even one of the most conventional women of the town, Miss Perdita Mayo, recognizes, Miss Eckhart's differences are her strengths (302). It is her differences, in fact, that enable her to survive the most intimate of attacks to her sense of self--a rape by a black man. Miss Eckhart does not buy into the mentality that requires she be more debilitated by shame than by the act of sexual violence itself. Her refusal to move away after the episode reveals her strength of identity and points out the debilitating effect of the Morgana women's restricted, convention-locked attitudes. "They wished she had moved away . . . Then they wouldn't always have to remember that a terrible thing once happened to her. But Miss Eckhart stayed, as though she considered one thing not so much more terrifying than another" (301).

As Miss Eckhart's Otherness provides strength to her identity, so also does her sense of order. Miss Eckhart's order, however, differs from the need expressed by Porter's female protagonists. In Porter's women, order is used to restrict experiences and possibilities which are incompatible with their core sense of self. Order in these women is exclusionary, integrative, and cohesive. For Miss Eckhart, however, order supplies the heartbeat from which creative improvisation can spring. To remain regulated by order is, to Miss Eckhart, to deny oneself the infinite variety, passionate expression, and creativity which are

available as expansions of order and regularity. Its use by Miss Eckhart is thus not inhibitive but enabling of freedom and spaciousness of identity.

The most obvious example of Miss Eckhart's use of order is her use of the metronome. Miss Eckhart keeps the metronome locked in a wall safe, "like the most precious secret in the teaching of music" (293). There is a wonderful rightness in this object being connected with music, which is throughout Welty's texts associated with fluidity and passion. Miss Eckhart's metronome keeps her students' music from faltering, losing its rhythm, or stopping altogether. Ideally, this regulation is only necessary until a pupil achieves her own feel for the music, at which point her own interpretation, rhythms, and expression enter into the music. Miss Eckhart, on the night of the recital--which is presumably a demonstration of their finest efforts--closes the metronome, allowing each pianist her own rhythms; significantly, all but Virgie play their worst (313). No reprimand comes from Miss Eckhart, however: "it was as though Miss Eckhart, at the last, were grateful to you for anything" (313--emphasis in original).

Virgie alone refuses to play during lessons to the metronome's steady tick. Only she has the intensity and responsiveness to feel the life of the music, to immerse herself entirely in its fullness and range. Significantly, Miss Eckhart welcomes Virgie's refusal because it shows her

ability to move beyond structure into passionate involvement--into a wider realm of emotion and experience, a realm her other students cannot enter. "At Virgie's words, Miss Eckhart quickly--it almost seemed that was what she'd wanted to hear--stopped the hand and slammed the little door, bang" (293).

Cassie Morrison, as might be expected, interprets this exchange negatively. "Miss Eckhart had made an exception of Virgie Rainey, and now fell humble before her impudence" (293). Because she herself fears the force of Virgie's unrestricted identity, Cassie assumes that Miss Eckhart too must feel intimidated by it. She thus interprets Virgie's relationship with Miss Eckhart as invasive, as a destructive, diminishing influence on the "weaker" Miss Eckhart.

Anybody could tell that Virgie was doing something to Miss Eckhart. She was turning her from a teacher into something lesser. . . . There were times when Miss Eckhart's Yankeeess, if not her very origin, some last quality to fade, almost faded. Before some caprice of Virgie's, her spirit dropped its head. The child had it by the lead. Cassie saw Miss Eckhart's spirit as a terrifyingly gentle water-buffalo cow . . . [a]nd sooner or later, after taming her teacher, Virgie was going to mistreat her. (294)

Although Cassie is accurate in seeing Miss Eckhart as a sort of victim (even Virgie, years later, admits this truth) it is not a one-sided victimization nor is this by any means the complete picture. Oblivious to the fact that Miss Eckhart willingly allows Virgie's treatment of her, Cassie

is unaware of the possibility that their relationship can be a constructive one. What Miss Eckhart essentially allows Virgie to do is to touch her, to let her see aspects of her self that no one else--least of all Cassie, because of her insistence on a singular definition of Miss Eckhart's identity--is capable of seeing. Peter Schmidt also agrees that Miss Eckhart withholds none of her self from Virgie, but allows her to participate in her artistic passion and to have access to her emotional being. Only Virgie is bold enough to break through surfaces to expose what lies beneath; only she shares Miss Eckhart's energy and intensity enough to make the view possible. To open herself to Virgie, as she does in the scene described below, is a risk, and through doing it, Miss Eckhart does make herself vulnerable. But to refuse Virgie access to her self would be to deny both herself and Virgie a full range of experience, to close them both from an Otherness that is potentially enabling of the wider range of identity they both seek.

An incident which occurs at a political speaking perhaps best illustrates the sometimes painful openness of their relationship. While Miss Eckhart sits quietly on the grass, listening to the band play, Virgie "run[s] closer and closer circles around Miss Eckhart" (298), wrapping her with clover chains. Virgie "never rest[s] as long as the music play[s]" (297), and her dancing and spinning alter with the

mood of each piece played. Cassie interprets this as a painful or even terrifying experience for Miss Eckhart (298), and there is quite possibly an element of both in Miss Eckhart's unprotesting response. Yet it is also a sort of tribute--Virgie, responding emotively to the shifting moods of the music, centralizes Miss Eckhart in her joyful dances. The clover chains with which she festoons her teacher are essentially no different from the single magnolia blossoms Virgie consistently offers to Miss Eckhart at each piano lesson (290): both are an unspoken tribute, and Miss Eckhart allows the clover chain to "lie on her breast" (298), close to her heart.

Incredibly, Peter Schmidt argues that Virgie deliberately mocks Miss Eckhart in this and other scenes to improve her social standing among the community girls. Though Virgie is from a poor family, Schmidt contends, exploiting Miss Eckhart allows Virgie to "[gain] a measure of status that even her superior piano playing can never give her: she becomes a leader for all the girls, even those from the best families" (92). Yet Virgie, like Easter, is too independent, too indifferent to the opinions of others to ever strive for group acceptance. Schmidt's reading also strangely contradicts his earlier claim that Virgie is honored by Miss Eckhart's attention (92).

An image which Welty uses in another of her texts--The Optimist's Daughter--may help to further explain Virgie's

and Miss Eckhart's relationship. Welty describes two pigeons feeding off each other, one reaching deep into the other's craw to obtain the seed stored there. It is in some ways a violent image and certainly Laurel, the protagonist of The Optimist's Daughter, is initially repulsed by it. Eventually, however, Laurel accepts the act as natural and even sometimes necessary. As Helen Hurt Tiegreen puts it, Laurel, through her acceptance of the birds' actions, realizes that "people feed off each other in their hunger and need--an act which with all its repulsiveness is as natural as life itself" (619). Virgie and Miss Eckhart, too, in their hunger for what the other can offer them, do occasionally "feed off" each other, a sort of mutual victimization and a mutual nourishing.

Miss Eckhart thus allows Virgie access to--and Virgie pays tribute to--that self which is vulnerable to exposure, yet which empowers her private, yet ever-present, capacity for fluidity, alterability, and movement. Only once does Miss Eckhart display the full range of her identity, even to Virgie, and to those who witness it, it is "more than the ear could bear to hear or the eye to see" (301). Miss Eckhart's piano playing, with a background orchestra of a thundering summer storm, elicits this response. As Marilyn Arnold points out, this scene reveals the turbulence below "the shell of Miss Eckhart's composure" (68).

Playing the piece reveals the fullness and power of Miss Eckhart's identity and gives audible voice to a fluidity of identity which defies the boundaries of gender or even of humanity.

The thunder rolled and Miss Eckhart frowned and bent forward or she leaned back to play; at moments her solid body swayed from side to side like a tree trunk. The piece was . . . so long and stirring that it soon seemed longer than the day itself had been, and in playing it Miss Eckhart assumed an entirely different face. Her skin flattened and drew across her cheeks, her lips changed. The face could have belonged to someone else--not even to a woman, necessarily. It was the face a mountain could have, or what might be seen behind the veil of a waterfall. There in the rainy light it was a sightless face, one for music only[.] . . . And if the sonata had an origin in a place on earth, it was the place where Virgie, even, had never been and was not likely ever to go. (300-01)

Unknowable in its origin or its destination, just as Miss Eckhart herself is, infinite and expansive, the music moves with a passion which comes through Miss Eckhart's fingers--fingers that keep alive an inward force which might otherwise ebb: "her fingers like foam on rocks pulled at the spent-out part with unstilled persistence, insolence, violence" (302). Significantly, this force is likened to powerful and turbulent waves, Welty's frequent metaphor for the unleashed potential of female identity.

What the three girls--Cassie, Jinny Love, and Virgie--witness is the torrential force that lies behind a free-falling waterfall, very unlike the unmoving, painted waterfall scene on the face of the clock which marks the

increments of their lessons (290). So absolutely "Other" is this vision that the girls understandably view this moment as uncharacteristic of the woman they think they know.

[S]omething had burst out, unwanted, exciting, from the wrong person's life. This was some brilliant thing too splendid for Miss Eckhart, piercing and striking the air around her the way a Christmas firework might almost jump out of the hand that was, each year, inexperienced anew. (301)

Yet even Cassie recognizes in the music's flow something intensely personal, a force of feeling which comes from under the skin, a passion which originates in pain and works through that to beauty: "[Miss Eckhart] had been pricked and the music came like the red blood under the scab of a forgotten fall" (301).

All this is what Miss Eckhart wants to communicate to Virgie. "Miss Eckhart . . . was strict to the last in the way she gave all her love to Virgie Rainey and none to anybody else[.] . . . [T]he only one she had ever wanted to have for 'people' was Virgie Rainey Danke schoen" (307, 308). In Virgie, Miss Eckhart sees a potential which overarches hers because there are no defenses built against it; in Virgie she sees herself and what she could not be. Miss Eckhart symbolically pins her hopes upon Virgie by giving her a butterfly pin, a symbol of the transformation she wants to effect in Virgie (306). The broken safety-catch on the pin indicates that the pin probably once belonged to her and was used, making this almost a direct

transference of the capacity she has for spaciousness and freedom of identity; it also suggests that the safety that is so necessary in the expression of Miss Eckhart's passion and intensity--a safety achieved through her careful ordering--will be a useless encumbrance to Virgie. She flies without a net, she takes chances fearlessly with her identity.

As the title of this work suggests, the focus of the text is upon a June recital. As the story unfolds, however, the remembered recital, when Virgie and Cassie were thirteen and Miss Eckhart had a room full of pupils, is itself multiplied. Cassie's remembrance of the yearly recitals reproduces them into the present, while Miss Eckhart's recreated, private recital in the now-vacant house next door actualizes her memories. To look at these two recitals together--the remembered and the recreated--is to see the latter as a positive extension of the former, a more fluent expression of Miss Eckhart's expansiveness of self which she has not allowed to diminish.

In the yearly recitals, Miss Eckhart's usually concealed fullness and intensity is partially revealed, but still mostly exists within her careful ordering. Peter Schmidt remarks that a public power and authority is conceded to Miss Eckhart yearly by the community, though both are only temporary (99). In addition, the importance Miss Eckhart accords to the event, Schmidt further points

out, "does not seem entirely to recognize a higher, patriarchal authority." Miss Eckhart's demeanor proclaims the self-sufficiency of her bond with her students and the fact that she feels bound to teach her students not just social skills but the ability to discover a decidedly individual, independent, and 'unheard of' voice--at whatever cost" (96).

Only a page prior, however, with his customary contradiction, Schmidt claims that it is the mothers who retain the true power through making the dresses upon which the recital's beauty is presumably dependent and by the fact that the "language" of the event is the social propriety that they control (95). Unquestionably, however, Welty's description of the event emphasizes Miss Eckhart's power, her particular style of expressing herself, and the transformation of which she is capable.

There is a change in Miss Eckhart during recital time which approaches but does not surpass the beautiful fluidity of identity which she expresses while she herself plays. Still, she is transformed in some undefinable way, a "Surprise Lily" with her own beauty.

And Miss Eckhart pushed herself to quite another level of life for [the recital]. A blushing sensitivity sprang up in her every year at the proper time like a flower of the season, like the Surprise Lilies that came up with no leaves and overnight in Miss Nell's yard. Miss Eckhart stirred here and there, utterly carried away by matters that at other times interested her least[.] . . . It was strange, exciting. (311--emphases mine)

The decoration and preparation for the yearly recitals duplicate Miss Eckhart's personal transformation, her new fullness and unexpected beauty, and create their own sense of multiplicity. Innumerable ribbons and flower clusters are set about the parlor, "dividing and re-dividing the room" (312), while intricate paper streamers branch from the chandelier, creating an almost dizzying effect (312). The delicate gold chairs are "set in a solid row across the room, to look as if all were gold" (310), an unmistakable replication of the goldenness which throughout the collection is associated with characters possessing a richness of identity. Every girl is to wear a dress which is "fuller and [has] more trimming" (309) than any other dress she owns, and each dress is accented with a sash, each one a different color. Though Miss Eckhart insists on a full spectrum and the contrasts within it, she does not allow clashes of color, but works out a harmonious and complementary order to the hues. "She explained to the children that it was important which color followed which. 'Think of God's rainbow and its order,' and she would shake her pencil in abrupt little beats in an arch overhead" (309).

The culmination of Miss Eckhart's program is her creation of a crescent moon design on the floor in front of her, using the girls' baskets of flowers to fill in the shape. This too is a carefully structured element of the

evening. "The pupil could hold the basket for the count of three--this had been rehearsed, using a black umbrella--then present it back to Miss Eckhart" (310). Yet the design created is of symbolic importance. The moon's association with the spaciousness of female identity throughout Welty's work has already been discussed, and the imagery here vividly establishes Miss Eckhart as a source of such female range. As later in the evening she has an all-encompassing smile for all the girls--[s]he smiled, not on any particular one but on everyone, everywhere she looked and everywhere she went" (314)--and holds them all close to her (315), so here Miss Eckhart through the flowers symbolically gathers them all to herself. In so doing, she adds them and the moment to her identity and provides each of them the same opportunity.

All these elements combine on the night of the recital to create an atmosphere which vibrates with unfamiliarity and fullness. Even the metronome is changed, exchanging its predictable, relentless movement for an irregular, spontaneous tick like a spirit which wants release.

[T]he room seemed to shake with the agitation of palmetto and feather fans alone, plus the occasional involuntary tick of the metronome within its doors. There was the mixture together of agitation and decoration which could make every little child turn pale with a kind of ultimate dizziness. (312)

Not surprisingly, Virgie and Miss Eckhart are the ones most affected by the changed and charged atmosphere. Virgie

drips with sweat from the exertion of playing her piece (313), and Miss Eckhart too, though her fingers never touch the keys, participates in the same passion with a similar abandon. "In the still night air her dress felt damp and spotted, as though she had run a long way" (315).

Though Miss Eckhart's usually concealed fluidity and force are partially revealed in these yearly recitals, they are even more pronounced in the second. In the recital just described, Miss Eckhart still depends on structure and plan to control the degree of her identity she exposes. Three years later, all her pupils have stopped taking lessons, primarily because Miss Eckhart is a victim of World War I hostility toward Germans and because Nina Carmichael's mother, by removing her girls from lessons, initiated a string of other departures (306). Even without her life's work to sustain her, however, Miss Eckhart's plurality has not diminished but has intensified. If the first recital was designed as a showcase for Virgie's talents, this one is created to give vent to her own intensity and passion. Significantly, Miss Eckhart re-produces elements off the recital solely for her own pleasure, unaware that Loch delights in her every move or that her playing stirs a current of memory in Cassie.

Much is said about the MacLain house in which this recital is to take place. Loch describes the house through his own plural perspective, and the language and imagery he

employs establishes the house as a wonderfully appropriate place for Miss Eckhart's activities below and Virgie's sexual escapades above. Loch's description--and even Cassie's--emphasize the house's fluidly changing aspect and appearance, its openness to the movement and freedom within and beyond its walls, its participation in the deep and unknown. Cassie remarks that the house's "unpainted side changed passively with the day and the season, the way a natural place like the river bank changed" (285). And the waters within those river banks, as Cassie knows and fears, agitate with life: "a restless current seemed to flow dark and free around [the house]" (286). Loch uses similar imagery to convey the same urgent sense of movement and mutability, and later connects that imagery with Virgie's presence in the house (279). "Splashy as a waterfall in a forest, [the leaky gutter] shook him with that agony of being made to wake up from a sound sleep to be taken away somewhere, made to go. It made his heart beat fast" (277). The parlor, where Miss Eckhart prepares for her recital, is described as shaded, "clear and dark as a pool he knew in the river" (276). The room has no doors to close it off from what is beyond it, but only a curtain of beads that "you could see through" (276). Both details imply a transparency which allows a far-sighted view and an exposed and vulnerable openness. The glass in a picture frame shows the beauty and freedom possible through such transparency,

for it "reflect[s] the light outdoors and the flight of birds between branches of trees" (276). Later, in "The Wanderers," Virgie is explicitly shown to have this transparency of being.

Perhaps the most important image, however, is the fig tree which shades the MacLain house, for through it the house and its occupants are explicitly associated with multiple possibilities, endless expressions of self. Intriguingly, it is fruit from this tree that Miss Eckhart has Virgie bring her in "payment" for her lessons (304). "The big fig tree was many times a magic tree with golden fruit that shone in and among its branches like a cloud of lightning bugs--a tree twinkling all over, burning, on and off, off and on" (279). This is, of course, a similar image to that used in Porter's story "Holiday" to suggest the multiplicity which Miranda eventually accepts. In "June Recital," the image is expanded, connected with other images which describe aspects or manifestations of that full and changing identity. The figs which shine like fireflies, for example, are a "golden fruit," recalling again the goldenness which glitters among the pages of Welty's work and paralleling the golden apples of its title. In the Yeats poem, "Song of the Wandering Aengus," golden apples are the impetus and the reward for wandering. The figs' connection with these golden apples and their association, in turn, with the pulsing light of fireflies suggest a

mutable, constantly shifting, and freely-seeking sense of identity. Importantly, Loch expects "the sailor" that comes to the house with Virgie to pick the figs and waits to see "what the girl would hurry him into" (278), an acknowledgement that they interiorize the qualities of identity represented by the figs.

Not only Virgie but Miss Eckhart also participates in the multiple possibilities suggested by these images. Her simple presence in a house which is a conduit for such a flow of energy and change is alone enough to affirm her participation in its current: the house opens as easily to her at the front as it does to Virgie at the back, and her body's shape, as Loch sees it through the moving streams of beads, "quiver[s] for a moment" (281), a suggestion of her undefinability and permeable sense of being. Yet more than her presence connects her with these possibilities; her preparations in the parlor for a final recital best demonstrate the quality of her being.

Most critics assume Miss Eckhart's insanity in this second recital scene (Pitavy-Souques, "Watchers and Watching" 508; Yaeger, "Dialogic Imagination" 570; Schmidt 59). Peter Schmidt even considers her plan to burn down the house as an attempted suicide (53), a desperate attempt to destroy her monstrous identity as Medusa, the community's portrayal of her which she has incorporated (63). Considering Miss Eckhart unaware of the "relationship

between objects and the outside world," Daniele Pitavy-Souques also declares her insane. Pitavy-Souques does not even entertain the possibility that Miss Eckhart's elaborate preparations are not meant for an outside world to see, but are private embellishments for/to her self. Miss Eckhart becomes both subject and object in her private recital: as both performer and audience, Miss Eckhart assures that she is the object of no one's gaze but her own. As presented in the text, the recital is neither a narcissistic act nor an insane one. Miss Eckhart prepares and conducts her recital with a self-awareness that would be lacking in an insane person. Yaeger accords to Miss Eckhart a somewhat firmer stance as a subject, conceding that "[e]ven after she has taken leave of her senses, she is still able to resurrect a private teleology; she returns to the house where she taught piano lessons . . . determined . . . to finish her story" (580).

Loch observes as Miss Eckhart decorates the room, tearing strips of newspapers into streamers that all "[ray] out" from the piano, making it the focal point of the room. Interestingly, the newspaper she uses is the Bugle, which in "Moon Lake" and "The Winds" is connected with a fullness of being. Alternately, Miss Eckhart's shredding of the newspaper (which is associated with the rigid patriarchs of the town--Mr. Morrison, editor, chief among them) and her burning of the political flyers picturing "Mr. Drewsie

Carmichael . . . candidate for mayor" (316) may suggest her rejection of patriarchal authority and control. With the newspapers and flyers, she fashions her own female beauty and fuels her own female fire.

Miss Eckhart is profuse with her decoration, creating a beauty that fills the room and expands even beyond what Loch can conceive. "Soon everything seemed fanciful and beautiful enough to Loch; he thought she could stop. But the old woman kept on. This was only a part of something in her head" (283). Miss Eckhart's movements reveal a freedom and newness of identity previously unexpressed. She hangs a quilt by climbing "the way women climb, death-defying" (284), and seems to Loch as if she is ready to skip (283). Her movements seem most youthful and transformed, however, when she walks across the street to pick a single magnolia blossom--Virgie's offering now duplicated by and for her self.

[S]he crossed the road to the Carmichael yard and came back with some green leaves and one bloom from the magnolia tree--carried in her skirt. She pulled the corners of her skirt up like a girl, and she was thin beneath her old legs. But she zigzagged across the road--such a show-off, carefree way. (283--emphases mine)

With the room finally filled with Miss Eckhart's self-constructed beauty, her recital begins. The recital consists of a single selection, and even this piece is left unfinished, perhaps suggesting Miss Eckhart's refusal of closure. Instead, she plays only the opening bars of Fur

Elise, picking out with one hand and repeating the simple melody. Her choice of this piece is extremely significant. First, it reinforces her connection with Virgie, Welty's most multiplicitous character. Fur Elise is "Virgie Rainey's piece. . . . It was a kind of signal that Virgie had burst in" (292). It of all Virgie's playing seemingly produced the most pleasure for Miss Eckhart. After every performance of the song, Miss Eckhart would say, "'Virgie Rainey, danke schoen'" (287). In addition, even as amateurishly as Miss Eckhart is playing the composition, still it has the ability to express and to evoke from others a deeply-felt emotion. Loch, who, as I have shown, is particularly open to all the influences which surround him, makes not only personal associations with the music, but also senses that it expresses something beyond his comprehension or experience. This "otherness" is perhaps those aspects of Miss Eckhart's identity that the tune can convey.

Then the little tune seemed the only thing in the whole day, the whole summer . . . that was accountable: it was personal. But he could not tell why it was so. It came like a signal, or a greeting--the kind of thing a horn would play out in the woods. . . . It took him back to when his sister was so sweet, to a long time ago. To when they loved each other in a different world, a boundless, trustful country all its own . . . different altogether from his solitary world now. (280)

To Loch, the song is powerful and emotive, personal yet reflecting a distant, untamed territory that is part of that self yet not bounded by it. Also important is that he sees

this as a relational region, not a solitary one. These aspects are nearly identical to those Miss Eckhart expresses when she performs during the summer storm.

It may also be important that Beethoven originally composed the piece "For Elisa;" Miss Eckhart's full name is Lotte Elisabeth (310). Her playing of the piece may suggest that she possesses some of the qualities that inspired Beethoven to create the music, and it may also indicate the private pleasure she receives from this expression of her self. This recital is "For Elisa," a private moment reflecting her self-sufficiency and autonomy of pleasure.

Miss Eckhart's music is the opus to a larger symphony which is "in her head." The poem, "Song of the Wandering Aengus," which runs through Cassie Morrison's head, prompted by hearing Miss Eckhart's music, describes a man who pursues a "glittering girl," motivated by "a fire in [his] head"; it is this line, in fact, which closes "June Recital" and whose power eludes Cassie. Miss Eckhart, however, captures the glittering girl for herself in her self through building an actual fire in her piano. This fire is a metaphoric expression of the fire within her, a fire which Miss Eckhart keeps burning throughout her life and which in this episode she intends to make blaze. Tragically, however, this fullest display of her identity is thwarted by the group of men who turn her private, genuine efforts into a crazy burlesque and in so doing smother her fire.

Miss Eckhart herself unwittingly inhibits her own fire. Loch watches as she closes the windows of the house and stuffs cracks with newspaper. "Everything she did was wrong, after a certain point. . . . What she really wanted was a draft. Instead, she was keeping air away, and let her try to make fire burn in an airless room" (284). Though this act can easily be seen as an unintentional replication of her own lifetime of restriction and closure, it is better viewed as Miss Eckhart's very real effort to protect the fire within from outside forces which could snuff it out. Closing the room is an attempt to intensify the power of the fire: if it was "as hot as fire" (312) at the previous piano recitals, this one will be a literal fire.

Interestingly, Welty in an interview revealed that she "associate[s] happiness and getting something right with hot summer," adding that she most loves to write in the summer, enjoying the "typing and sweating" (ConvW 346). Both Welty's and Miss Eckhart's finest artistic expression, then, is fueled by the same heat. Elsewhere, Welty admits that in her creation of both Miss Eckhart and The Golden Apples, she has expressed her own passion and created her own June recital.

What I have put into her is my passion for my own life work, my own art. Exposing yourself to risk is a truth Miss Eckhart and I had in common. What animates and possesses me is what drives Miss Eckhart, the love of her art and the love of giving it, the desire to give it until there is no more left. Even in the small and literal way, what I had done in assembling and connecting all the stories in The Golden Apples, and bringing

them off as one, was not too unlike the June recital itself. (One Writer's Beginnings 110-11)

In this episode, the metronome has a much-altered role. Throughout her life, the metronome has been a symbol of Miss Eckhart's persistent effort to keep the music constant within her. It has also encouraged the steady progress of this same music in her pupils. Now, however, she uses it to fuel the fire in her head, to bring to the surface what was to this point mostly an internalized passion, a private sense of expansiveness. Marilyn Arnold notes that "this instrument of measured order becomes a symbol of defiance and a symbol of potential destruction" (67). Gathering scraps together, Miss Eckhart starts a fire in the piano itself, with the metronome posed beside it. "She wanted things to suit herself, nobody else would have been able to please her; and she was taking her own sweet time. She was building a bonfire of her own in the piano and would set off the dynamite when she was ready and not before" (316). What Loch believes to be dynamite is the metronome; its unfamiliar and steady ticking sounds like a bomb ready to explode, and for what it represents of Miss Eckhart's intentions, this is true. When at another point the metronome is connected with the moon, which can, in Loch's view, potentially shatter (329), the metronome also becomes associated with a strong female force that disintegrates boundaries. This is a moment not of closure but of culmination for Miss Eckhart: all the passion, the beauty,

the fervor, the vivacity of her life are released in this act. To the men gathered in the room (Old Man Moody, Fatty Bowles, and King MacLain, passing by and seeing Miss Eckhart's fledgling fire, have entered the house to get a closer look) she exposes the entirety of her self, her very heart, when she shows them the metronome. "The old woman held her possession to her, drawn to her big gray breast. Her eyesight returned from far to close by. Then she stood looking at the three people fixedly, as if she showed them her insides, her live heart" (322).

Once before, Miss Eckhart's identity was described as a beautiful and potentially dangerous explosion, an eruption that defies containment. "This was some brilliant thing too splendid for Miss Eckhart, piercing and striking the air around her the way a Christmas firework might almost jump out of the hand" (301). This metaphor was used to describe Miss Eckhart's piano playing, and its repetition in the scene three years later at the MacLain house links the two passionate moments.

Though "the smoke mostly stayed inside, contained and still" (318), and though the fire is as quick to die as it is to ignite, the fire in Miss Eckhart's head bursts out strongly. Her hair, "cropped and white and lighted up all around" already seems haloed with fire (317), yet it becomes literally ablaze when it catches fire: "[t]he little short white frill turned to flame" (322). Patricia Yaeger claims

that the fire in Miss Eckhart's head scorches rather than gives light to her identity ("Dialogic Imagination" 583), yet in this moment, she is more--not less--irrepressible than ever before: "She rose up, agitated now, and went running about the room, holding the candle above her, evading the men each time they tried to head her off" (322--emphasis mine). Only Miss Eckhart's hair and, appropriately, the magnolia bloom are "fierce-burning" (320).

While two men, Fatty Bowles and Old Man Moody, (their names suggesting the diminishment of their patriarchal authority) smother the flame that now is Miss Eckhart, King MacLain, who detours his wandering through the house, looks on. Welty specifically contrasts MacLain, who is known for his wandering and his independent spirit, with Miss Eckhart, who is not, and it is Miss Eckhart who emerges as the freer, the more expansive of the two in that moment. MacLain, it is true, steps in "with rather a flare," yet "he could burn up in too big a hurry" (320--emphasis mine), very different from the difficult-to-extinguish Miss Eckhart. She is a "'firebug'" (321) and a "firefly," earlier associated with a free and shifting multiplicity of identity. The two men ask MacLain if he knows Miss Eckhart from his travels, which in itself suggests her ranging spirit, and it is implied that he, not she, is the one who wearies of roaming (321). Her vision remains remote and unreachable, unbounded and free in

space: "There close to the old lady's face he cocked his head, but she looked through him, a long way through [MacLain]. She could have been a lady on an opposite cliff, far away, out of eye range and earshot, but about to fall" (321). Clearly, Miss Eckhart is not MacLain's inferior, but at least an equal star, if not a brighter one. For at another point in the text, Cassie remembers that Miss Eckhart had never been afraid of MacLain. "They always passed without touching, like two stars, perhaps they had some kind of eclipse-effect on each other" (296).

Ultimately, however, Miss Eckhart's fiery forte becomes a finale. The men lead her, singed and silent, out of the house, doubtlessly convinced they have saved her life when in fact they have smothered it. No longer are her steps quick and light, but "short, hesitant" and stumbling (323). Now compared to a locust shell clinging to an empty door, she seems depeleted and empty.

As Miss Eckhart is being led away, held between the two men, Virgie steps out through the front door of the MacLain house, which closes "with a frail sound" behind her bold exit (325). Absolutely undaunted by the disapproving Morgana women who stop to stare, Virgie walks through the center of their group, "click[ing] her heels as if nothing had happened in the past or behind her, as if she were free, whatever else she might be" (325). She continues also to walk past Miss Eckhart, with no acknowledgement of her:

though Virgie's identity has unquestionably been enriched by Miss Eckhart's, it is years before she can fully admit her influence, years before she can come to terms with their relationship, years before she can see how alike they are in their differences.

For now, Virgie sees mostly only their differences. Though Virgie is receptive to a broad range of identities which exists beyond her own, her expansive acceptance of otherness does not as often reach to include Miss Eckhart. "She was full of the airs of wildness, she swayed and gave way to joys and tempers, her own and other people's with equal freedom--except never Miss Eckhart's, of course" (291). It is Cassie who adds that Virgie "never" demonstrates the same openness to Miss Eckhart; yet Virgie's tributes to Miss Eckhart alone disprove the entire accuracy of this statement. Still, Virgie undoubtedly views Miss Eckhart's identity as antithetical to her own--not an enriching otherness to augment her own identity, but a stifling counter-force.

Virgie's partial closure toward Miss Eckhart, then, has the same intent as Easter's withheld self: both guard their selves from depletion. It is perhaps Virgie's resistance to Miss Eckhart which prompts Elizabeth Kerr to claim that Miss Eckhart does not serve as an effective "initiation mentor" (135). However, Miss Eckhart clearly does have a positive effect upon Virgie, encouraging her talent, introducing her

to the passion of creativity, and enabling her to realize a fuller range of identity. In the last scene of "The Wanderers," Virgie realizes her full debt to Miss Eckhart.

At eleven, Virgie is a vivacious girl who fights boys, jumps red peppers, and drinks vanilla and claims it doesn't burn (291, 292). While the other girls move punctually and "mincing like strangers" between piano lessons (288), Virgie comes carelessly late, banging her bike wheel against the lattice, shaking the foundation in more than one respect (290). Autonomous, spirited, and even belligerent, Virgie lives in a country to which other girls her age have not yet travelled.

With her customary swiftness and lightness she had managed to skip an interval, some world-in-between where Cassie and Missie and Parnell were, all dyeing scarves. Virgie had gone direct into the world of power and emotion, which was beginning to seem even bigger than they had all thought. (303)

Most of the community, in fact, regards her as part of a different time and a more distant place, for they associate her with the future and imagine her as a missionary or "the first lady governor of Mississippi," both exotic and unfathomable destinies to them (292). Miss Eckhart, most of all, not only imagines Virgie in a world beyond Morgana, but fiercely desires that for her. If Cassie and the other girls define the world as Morgana, or emphasize service to others--as missionary or governor--over growth of the self, Miss Eckhart decidedly does not, stressing instead the value of Virgie's "voice" through music.

Virgie would be heard from in the world, playing that, Miss Eckhart said, revealing to the children with one ardent cry her lack of knowledge of the world. How could Virgie be heard from, in the world? And 'the world'! Where did Miss Eckhart think she was now? Virgie Rainey, she repeated over and over, had a gift, and she must go away from Morgana. From them all. From her studio. (303)

Virgie did, in fact, leave Morgana for some unnamed place when she was sixteen. She returned, less than a year later, for her brother's funeral and never left again. This is the extent of Virgie's literal wandering "from them all," yet her capacity for inward wandering allows her a far-ranging identity that cannot be restricted by circumstance or place. As Elaine Pugh defines it, wandering is "a movement around one's globe to touch a variety of lives, to accumulate and assimilate various modes of being" (445). As Pugh's definition suggests, this sort of wandering influence identity, expanding its range and variety and enabling a fluid receptivity to "various modes of being."

Thus her return does not signify an end but an endurance of her expansive identity. Jumping from the high step of the still-moving train upon her return to Morgana, Virgie sees Morgana as changed, altered by her perspective. The countryside is infused with "the naked sprawled-out light of a still-stretching outer world" (452--emphasis mine), the oaks are "counted continents against the big blue" (452), and the day extends boundlessly. It is the time of day "when fields glow like deep pools and the

expanding trees at their edges seem almost to open, like lilies, golden or dark" (453). Enlarging within herself and creating this outward sense of spaciousness is that aspect of her being which "feels and knows," the same area which Virgie alone could touch in Miss Eckhart. Here Virgie feels pain in her brother's death, yet is "happy" in the capacity to feel a full range of emotion--there is no "essence" to be known of her self but a "chorus" of voices and possibilities, as distant and multiple as crickets in the dark or stars in the sky. "[N]ow, alone, untouched now, she felt like dancing; knowing herself not really, in her essence, yet hurt; and thus happy. The chorus of crickets was as unprogressing and out of time as the twinkling of a star" (453--emphases mine).

Virgie has inherited this interior wandering from her father, Old Man Rainey (a distant cousin) implies, though Katie too has contributed to Virgie's spirit. Fate Rainey also is often unknowable, unpredictable, as elusive in some ways as the Fata of "Fata Morgana". Old Man Rainey affirms that Fate possessed the roaming spirit of the family. "'He traveled around a bit,' he said at length. 'And settled hereabouts for the adventure of it'" (443). Though it may seem that the only wandering Fate does after "settling" is his dairy circuit up and down the streets of Morgana in his wagon, again, his actual movement does not determine the range of his identity any more than it does for Virgie.

Staying can be more of a challenge, more of a test of the true freedom of self, than leaving may be, as Old Man Rainey realizes. Loch Morrison, who shares this ability to inwardly wander, also recognizes in Fate a kindred spirit. Watching him and his horse-drawn wagon "come near, then far, and near again," Loch interprets his "buttermilk" cry as an assertion of identity and his route as a sort of magical exploration of unknown regions and depths.

Was it an echo--was an echo that? Or was it, for the last time, the call of somebody seeking about in a deep cave, 'Here--here! Oh, here am I!' . . . More than once he dreamed it was inside that [MacLain] house that the cave had moved, and the buttermilk man went in and out the rooms[.] . . . (278, 279)

The fact that Fate, defying convention, is the only father who attends recital night also suggests that he is attuned to Virgie's language, that he values and participates in his daughter's openness and exploration of multiple influences and experiences (311).

Virgie's nonconventionality and vitality make her "as exciting as a gypsy" when she is young (291); there is no risk, no negative consequences to her behavior and perspective then. Virgie, however, maintains her independence and defiant subjectivity into adulthood, when it is not so popularly accepted. Virgie is mostly an outcast because one evidence of her refusal to be restricted is her sexuality. In a southern society that has a history of basing a woman's virtue almost exclusively upon her

sexual purity (Clinton 137), Virgie, as an unmarried sexual being, understandably does not fit in. The other principal avenue for her multiplicity is in music, which, while not offensive to the citizens of Morgana, is nevertheless certainly as foreign. Together, these two involve all aspects of Virgie's identity--physical, emotional, spiritual, mental. A discussion of both as they add to Virgie's identity, expanding and enriching it, opening it to a variety of relationships, expressions, and perspectives, follows.

Through music, Virgie's identity achieves its fullest expression. Virgie--independent, passionate, wild, and headstrong in many senses of the word--can give vent to all these qualities through her playing. Virgie faces every new piece of music as a challenge to her self, as an opportunity to prove her own strength of identity. "[A]n ordeal was set for her each year and each year it was accomplished, with no yielding sign from Virgie that she had struggled" (310). Mastery, however, is not Virgie's greatest strength, but her ability to re-compose the music by infusing it with her self, refusing to allow it a single shape or feeling. Her rejection of the metronome shows this, as does her "[having] a little Rondo her way" or actually stomping on an Etude when it refuses to uncurl (294).

All these are intended as rebellions against Miss Eckhart's own presumed rigidity, yet in her defiance, Virgie

emulates Miss Eckhart's own intensity and non-conformity. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in Virgie's own musical performance. Though Virgie brings to the music her own specific interpretations, her response to it is remarkably similar to Miss Eckhart's. In the scene in which Miss Eckhart plays during the summer storm, she is so immersed in the music that she strikes Jinny Love as she is making a run (301). Virgie demonstrates the same oblivion--although hers is admittedly a determined oblivion--when she has no reaction to Miss Eckhart swatting flies on her hands while she plays. "Virgie, her face hardening under the progress of her advancing piece, could manage the most oblivious look of all, though Miss Eckhart might strike harder and harder at the persistent flies" (289).

Another important similarity is the water metaphors used to describe both, for the imagery connects Virgie and Miss Eckhart with the expansive female possibilities and the fluidity of identity with which water is associated throughout Welty's works. Niagara Falls, to Ellie Morgan, can offer her expanded voice and relationality; to Clytie and to Mrs. Larkin, rain water is a fluid medium in which they can retrieve a fuller sense of self; in "At The Landing" flood signifies an all-encompassing otherness and in "The Winds" Josie's movement toward the wider possibilities of mature female identity is upon the imaginary waters of a storm. Miss Eckhart's face and

fingers during her stormy piano performance are, respectively, connected through metaphors to waterfalls and ocean waves. From Virgie's fingers, "[t]he smooth clear music would move on like water, beautiful and undisturbed" (294).

If Miss Eckhart's performance is perceived as an "unstill'd . . . violence" (302), and somehow so frightening in its intensity that Cassie stands "with her whole body averted as if to ward off blows from Miss Eckhart's strong left hand" (301), then Virgie's music is equally as forceful. On the night of her final recital, Virgie performs passionately.

She played the Fantasia on Beethoven's Ruins of Athens, and when she finished and got up and made her bow, the red of the sash was all over the front of her waist, she was wet and stained as if she had been stabbed in the heart, and a delirious and enviable sweat ran down from her forehead and cheeks and she licked it in with her tongue.
(313)

The intensity with which she plays is described as both violent--the music and the moment forcibly entering her--and orgasmic, a sensual abandonment to the emotion of the music.

The same connection between Virgie's sexuality and her music is implied in the description of her arrival at piano lessons. Rejecting a feminine portfolio in which to carry her sheet music, Virgie rides a boy's bicycle to lessons with her music "rolled naked . . . and strapped to the boy's bar which she straddled" (289). It seems a natural progression that Virgie should demonstrate the same

exuberance and passion in her sexual relationships that she expresses in her music and that sex should encourage her multiplicity of identity.

In her sexual relationships as in her music, Virgie asserts a strong independence and subjectivity and through the different relationships she seeks out, expands her openness to a variety of experiences. The same claims that Ruth Weston makes for Fay of The Optimist's Daughter are equally appropriate for Virgie. With Virgie also, Freud's oppositions of male as "presence and power" and female as absence are reversed (84). Virgie is active--whole, not hole; Mr. Mabry, one of Virgie's sexual partners, is the one who is silent and "embarrassed" (459). Marcia McGowan adds that Virgie is the only woman in The Golden Apples who regards her body as a receiver as well as a giver of pleasure (153). While Virgie does not to me seem alone in this attitude (Mattie Will, Easter in her desirous beckoning of the night, and even Katie, in the vicarious pleasure she gets from imagining King's exploits, also seem to share Virgie's attitude), McGowan's statement does point out the fullness of Virgie's pleasure. It further suggests that Virgie--and these other women--can respond both as an active subject in sex--expressing her own desire and creatively enacting it--and as a responsive object, giving and receiving enjoyment from another.

As Loch watches Virgie and her "sailor," Bucky Moffit, jump a ditch and run under the leaves of the trees surrounding the MacLain house, he interprets her movements as a defiance of restriction and knows that she maintains her autonomy within this relationship. He comments that she had "let the sailor pick her up" one day, that "she started him coming" to the house, and wonders with curiosity "what the girl would hurry him into" (278--emphases mine). Neither is she contained in any way by the house; in fact, her presence in it opens the house further to the current which Cassie imagines surrounds it. Virgie enters easily by the back door, forces the bedroom window open (279), and creates her own free and joyful current by running endless circles around and over the bed, chasing and being chased by the sailor (282). Even the bed reflects the freedom and range of their sexual relationship, for the foot is missing, the mattress slants downward, and "a shadow from a tree, its branch and its leaves, slowly traveled over the hills and hollows of the mattress" (276). Quite obviously, their relationship is mutually satisfying and fulfills not only a sexual hunger, but a hunger for the pure pleasure of living. Their playful romping about the room, their eating pickles from a shared sack between them, and their comic play, holding pickle-cigars in their mouths, Groucho-like, all reveal this dimension of their relationship. It is a telling detail that the ladies of Morgana identify Virgie's

partner as Kewpie Moffit, showing their tendency to infantilize him, to deny him his maturity and sexual identity, while Virgie refers to him as Bucky, a name which suggests his irrepressibility.

Each of Virgie's relationships augments her identity through her participation in the other's otherness, their differences. Even those who reject her, or those whom she rejects, influence who she is, and her incorporation of all these experiences enlarges and multiplies her self. Importantly, however, Virgie is not bound to or by any of them, nor is she compromised or objectified by her relationships with them. Both remain "real people" that can "fold close" yet also maintain their separateness of identity (282). When Bucky and she run from the MacLain house, they part easily and go in opposite directions. The Morgana ladies, particularly Billy Texas Spights, consider this shocking; they demand commitment in relationship, and an almost slavish following-after on the part of Virgie. Billy Texas' cries of "'You're running the wrong way! . . . Better run after that sailor boy!'" (325) are ignored by Virgie, who will let no one determine her direction. Towards the end of "The Wanderers," Virgie watches as Mr. Mabry, another of her sexual partners, passes by her; she not only does not follow after him, but even allows him to "look through" her, and uses the moment to think through the effect of her relationships upon her own identity.

Mr. Mabry imagined he was coming to her eventually, but was it to him that she had come, backward to protection? She'd have had to come backward, not simply stand still, to get from the wild spirit of Bucky Moffitt (and where was he? Never under the ground! She smiled, biting the seed in the pepper grass), back past the drunk Simon Sojourner that didn't want her, and on to embarrassed Mr. Mabry, behind whom waited loud, harmless, terrifying Mr. Nesbitt who wanted to stand up for her. She had reached Mr. Mabry but she had passed him and it had not mattered about her direction, since here she was. (459--emphasis mine)

These do not seem the musings of an "unhappily promiscuous" woman, as Patricia Yaeger calls Virgie ("Dialogic Imagination" 570) or of a person whose public history has been defined and dominated by men, as Peter Schmidt claims (181), but those of a woman who has chosen to express and satisfy her sexual needs and has learned, grown, and wandered into a fuller range of identity for herself through her sexuality.

"The Wanderers" picks up Virgie's story begun in "June Recital." A span of nearly thirty years separates them. Though "The Wanderers" is the final story in the collection, and the last view we have of Virgie, it is not a conclusion. It is a particular strength of the text that Virgie is left on a stile, still in transition, a woman open to change and otherness, resisting closure. Virgie is still a wanderer, though her territory has shifted; still as multiplicitous, though its expression is in some ways altered.

Louise Westling is bothered by the open-endedness of the text, claiming it as a sign that Welty cannot describe

Virgie's independent life beyond the moment of sitting on a stile (Sacred Groves 74-75). Lowry Pei, however, sees the nonclosure as imaginatively expansive. "The book continues after its language leaves off; like Virgie, it has 'a life of its own, away'" (432).

"The Wanderers" opens with Virgie cutting a dress from plaid fabric, demonstrating her talent and creativity through this traditionally feminine art. Louise Westling remarks that the scene demonstrates Virgie's ability to fit and conform the "rigid conventional patterns" of the plaid to the feminine curves of her body (Sacred Groves 98-99). Yet it also describes Virgie's struggle to preserve the complex arrangement of the crossing colors and angles of her identity to make all the varied parts of her self coexist without destroying the individuality and beauty of the pattern. At times, this involves "struggling against" aspects of her self which could restrict her fullness or cut through the intricate connections which comprise her identity. Clearly, it is the process--the "struggle", the testing of her creativity, the compilation of pieces--which so delights Virgie; the "finished" product is not even mentioned, perhaps because her own identity never reaches a point of completion. Virgie's sewing in this respect does not differ from her later act of using the same sewing shears to cut the grass handful by handful (441). Both are

endless challenges, and both reveal Virgie's determination and autonomy.

The plaid is also a symbol of the complicated connections and intersections which comprise Virgie's identity. In the earlier discussion of Katie's identity, it was pointed out that Katie initially conceived of her identity as simply divided, with little complexity or pattern. She wanted, therefore, to be covered in "Virgie's hard-to-match-up plaid" which has the complexity and differences she desires (430). Her recitation of her own quilts' names which follows her lament, however, reveals that she has her own fullness with which to cover herself (431). Thus both mother and daughter have an intricacy to their identities, a fullness of connection and relationality. Katie has quilts named "Strange Spider Web, Hands All Around, Double Wedding Ring" (431); Virgie has the colorful intersections of her plaid.

One important connection to both, of course, is their relationship to each other. Virgie returns from her wandering at age seventeen specifically to be with her mother after the deaths of her husband and son, and Katie clearly depends on Virgie's support. Simply by her choice to return, Virgie shows her desire for relationship. Yet neither's identity is lessened by their mutual need, but is augmented, a truth Peter Schmidt affirms in his discussion of their strong bond (177). Virgie's relationship with her

mother is alone enough to counter Lowry Pei's claim that the characters of The Golden Apples must be independent of relationship in order to "be a self" (428). Virgie's other relationships with men and her friendships with Cassie, Snowdie, Old Man Rainey, and others further undermine Pei's assertion.

When Katie dies, therefore, Virgie faces a point of change and transition and experiences herself as separate and distanced from herself, as though a part of her self is wandering from her. She feels "as vacillating as though she were on the point of departure" (432--emphasis mine). Because their relationship was one which allowed both a freedom of identity, however, Virgie is able to release her mother with no depletion of her own self, as will be shown.

Virgie does not refuse any connection with an/other except that which will diminish her multiplicity, or which threatens to restrict her through its expectations or definitions. Because she views Miss Eckhart as primarily inhibiting her rather than enriching her, for example, Virgie rejects most of Miss Eckhart's openness. On the day of Virgie's mother's death, her house is full of people, but there are distances between the "mourners" and Virgie that a crowded room cannot lessen. All, except perhaps for Snowdie and Old Man Rainey, are there only to fulfill a social obligation--they do not mourn for Katie or sympathize with Virgie, but in fact make Virgie feel like a stranger among

them. When Virgie, planning to help with the food preparation, joins the crowd of women in the kitchen, they "[look] at her as though something--not only today--should prevent her from knowing at all how to cook--the thing they knew" (434).

The "thing they knew" is, of course, the fact of Virgie's sexual promiscuity, a difference which ostracizes her from these female guardians of virtue. So entire is their disassociation from Virgie because of her "difference" that they refuse to admit that she is capable of any of the traditional skills they value as women, such as cooking (Westling, Sacred Groves 101), turning her away with their stares when she turns the chicken. Thus when they later force their touch upon Virgie, she just as forcefully rejects it, recognizing their gestures as unfelt and insincere, an attempt to manipulate and determine her emotions. Virgie fights their grasp by making them feel a real hurt and shock, emotions they now only simulate. "They were all people who had never touched her before who tried now to struggle with her, their faces hurt. She was hurting them all, shocking them" (435). When Virgie refuses to respond as they expect her to, with "proper" collapsing grief, they of their own accord "draw away from her body and . . . give it a little shove forward, even their hands showing sorrow for a body that did not fall" (435).

Virgie does eventually cry, but it is not for the loss of her mother as much as for the community's inability to establish real connection, their misunderstanding of what true relationality requires--people open to otherness, allowing themselves time and growth and experience. When they comment that "'the road goes the wrong way'" now, thus blaming the changing times for the disintegration of simple, fruitful living, Virgie denies the truth of their comprehension. People, not time or circumstances, decide values and determine right relationships.

Though that was like a sad song, it was not true: the road still went the same, from Morgana to MacLain, from Morgana to Vicksburg and Jackson, of course. Only now the wrong people went by on it. They were all riding trucks, very fast or heavily loaded, and carrying blades and chains, to chop and haul the big trees to mill. They were not eaters of muscadines, and did not stop to pass words on the season and what grew. And the vines had dried. She wept because they could not tell it right, and they didn't press her for reasons. (435)

Only with King MacLain does Virgie sense a true and vital connection. With him, Virgie can look beyond herself and see him both as other from herself and yet also the same (Westling, Welty 38). Theirs is a link which needs no history and requires no certain time or place. "But she knew the kinship for what it was, whomever it settled upon, an indelible thing which may come without friendship or even too early an identity, may come even despisingly, in rudeness, intruding in the middle of sorrow" (446). The connection is conveyed in a "hideous face" and a "silent

yell" which MacLain directs at Virgie. "It was a yell at everything--including death, not leaving it out" (446). Wide-ranging and all-encompassing, MacLain's silent shout expresses his anger at being restricted by age and ultimately by death and simultaneously defies those limitations. By King's including Virgie in his gaze-- "indeed, he chose her"--she can empathize with his frustration and recognize his defiance. As she watches, MacLain cracks a bone between his teeth and sucks the marrow from it as he does from life. Virgie is "refreshed all of a sudden at that tiny but sharp sound" (446).

Katie Rainey's death provides Virgie with the opportunity to re-examine her own identity, to refamiliarize herself with its components. As the above paragraphs show, Virgie struggles, in the crowds who overtake her house in preparation for the funeral, to keep her identity inviolate from the claims the community attempts to place on her, to refuse the weight of their limitations. Another scene, Virgie's swim in the river, continues this process of freeing Virgie's identity from restriction while allowing it a continued openness and fluidity.

Virgie walks to the river unaccompanied, alone with her self. Once there, she strips off her clothes, unburdening herself now as she did when at seventeen she returned home with a suitcase "as light as a shoebox, so little had she had to go away with and now to bring back--the lightness

made it easier" (452). The "openness of the water" (439) accepts Virgie's body and she offers it herself; there is in the meeting of body and water a perfect fluidity of exchange--a mutual openness, an acute sensitivity to all that surrounds her, a sudden expansiveness of self and a full immersion in the body of water which represents her female identity.

She saw her waist disappear into reflectionless water; it was like walking into sky, some impurity of skies. All was one warmth, air, water, and her own body. All seemed one weight, one matter . . . She began to swim in the river, forcing it gently, as she would wish for gentleness to her body. Her breasts around which she felt the water curving were as sensitive at that moment as the tips of wings must feel to birds, or antennae to insects. (440)

The light in this scene, as Peter Schmidt points out, "is Virgie's own shower of gold, but it does not involve a man at all: it comes from Virgie, returns to her, is one with her" (179).

As she floats freely in the water, Virgie is released from all connections and influences--past and future--which could inhibit her movement forward, including her relationship to her mother.

She felt the sand, grains intricate as little cogged wheels, minute shells of old seas, and the many dark ribbons of grass and mud touch her and leave her, like suggestions and withdrawals of some bondage that might have been dear, now dismembering and losing itself. She moved but like a cloud in skies, aware but only of the nebulous edges of her feeling and . . . the carelessness for the water of the river through which her body had already passed as well as for what was ahead. (440)

Remaining in Morgana because of her love and loyalty for her mother, Virgie now is freed by Katie's death to wander in actuality as well as in spirit. Virgie does not, however, reject memory--all memory, pleasant and disturbing, remains with her, "dappl[ing]" her with light and dark. "Memory dappled her like no more than a paler light, which in slight agitations came through leaves, not darkening her for more than an instant. The iron taste of the old river was sweet to her, though" (440). Cassie, by contrast, is bound by her memories of her mother, unable to be released by them, as is Virgie.

Virgie's perfect openness to an Otherness which is also Same, her acceptance of all experience and memory, both positive and negative, are aspects of Virgie's fullness of identity; they also enable it. Arriving at a point in the river where she is between currents, unswayed in any direction but perfectly at ease with herself, Virgie becomes a part of both currents, past and future, and experiences an intensified fullness of identity which can allow her to infinitely change, to know--even participate in--complete otherness, to become Other within herself.

In the middle of the river, whose downstream or upstream could not be told by a current, she lay on her stretched arm, not breathing, floating. Virgie had reached a point where in the next moment she might turn into something without feeling it shock her. (440--emphasis mine)

The fact that this fluidity is mirrored in the moon, which "[takes] its own light between one moment and the

next" (440) reaffirms the implications of this experience for Virgie's femininity. Through its moon imagery, this scene is linked to a later episode, when Virgie receives a night-blooming cereus from a country woman who comes to her door after dark. The flower, described as a "naked, luminous, complicated flower, large and pale as a face" (453), resembles the moon in appearance and possibly Virgie's own face as well. Virgie is strangely troubled by the gift. Louise Westling suggests that her fear may arise from being faced with the connection between her "music [and] the feminine yearnings she senses in the cows" that she milks (Sacred Groves 102). The sight prompts Virgie to explicitly connect the two female images Welty uses most recurrently--moon and water--to reveal the importance of relationality to her identity (specifically, but not exclusively, the mother-daughter bond).

She knew that now at the river . . . mist lay on the water and filled the trees, and from the eyes to the moon would be a cone, a long silent horn, of white light. It was a connection visible as the hair is in air, between the self and the moon, to make the self feel the child, a daughter far, far back. (454)

The image also points out the range and scope of Virgie's identity--from self to moon, knowing no tangible boundaries, able to feel and experience past identities as easily as present selves. This "silent horn," however, like Loch's bugle or the woman's coronet in "The Winds," does not contain multiplicity but disperses it; the mist thins,

revealing "brilliant jewel eyes" along the river banks and the winking points of light created by lightning bugs which flash "on and off, on and off, for as long in the night as she was there to see" (454).

Virgie's multiplicity--which includes her openness to otherness, her desire to add to herself through connections with others, her ability to change and "try on" different selves and to see and know these selves--is perhaps best expressed through the image of transparency. Transparency is in Welty's fiction a counterforce to what Cixous refers to as women's fear of the dark, a fear enforced in them by men, who tell women that

[y]our continent is dark. Dark is dangerous. You can't see anything in the dark, you are afraid. Don't move, you might fall. Above all, don't go into the forest. And we have internalized this fear of the dark. Women haven't had eyes for themselves. (Cixous and Clement 68)

Other characters and places associated with multiplicity are also described as transparent. Nina, for example, notices that at Easter's temple, "the skin was transparent enough for a little vein to be seen pounding under it" (353); the night sky in the same story, described as a "beast in gossamer" is also as "pale as a green grape, transparent like grape flesh over each tree" (359). King MacLain too is seen by Mattie Will as a "white glimmer," (334--emphasis mine) an almost invisible presence slipping between trees. The image is most completely developed, however, with Virgie. Her own transparency of being, an

acquired characteristic, enables her to regard barriers that are solid and impenetrable to others as permeable to her, allowing her a far-ranging vision and broad scope of identity. In addition, it makes possible the perfect fluidity evident in Virgie's river swim: her transparency admits otherness while exposing her self to being seen through and to being seen.

Describing this transparency as a light which "fight[s] off opacity," a female force the very opposite of the darkness woman is said to be, Cixous claims that it is a power so strong that

nothing can put it out. Feminine light doesn't come from above, doesn't fall, doesn't strike, doesn't go through. It radiates, it is a slow, sweet, difficult, absolutely unstoppable, painful rising . . . that finally tears open . . . the stolid, the volumes. Fighting off opacity from deep within. . . . And I see that she looks very closely with this light and she sees the veins and nerves of matter. (Cixous and Clement 88)

This process of enlightenment is perhaps seen most clearly in Virgie's swim in, ironically, the Big Black River, yet it is also evident in Snowdie. Despite Katie's perception, Snowdie's "shower of gold" is not showered down upon her by King (it "doesn't come from above, doesn't fall, doesn't strike"), but comes from within and outlasts him. Snowdie's shower of gold thrives, in fact, on King's absence--a nice reversal of his presumed phallic presence.

Virgie's progression from opacity to transparency is not absolute. Virgie, in fact, has deliberately made her

identity opaque to maintain her separateness and to defend her self from the community's prying urge to define and contain her. Katie, at the moment of her death, "goes opaque" in a different sense through her entrance into an unknowable realm or state.

Virgie had often felt herself at some moment callous over, go opaque; she had known it to happen to others; not only when her mother changed on the bed while she was fanning her. Virgie had felt a moment in life after which nobody could see through her, into her--felt it young. (452)

Certainly Virgie is opaque as a girl, when others regarded her as exciting and exotically different and definitely unknowable. With Miss Eckhart, too, Virgie cultivates her opacity, through her silence and deliberate unresponsiveness refusing to allow her teacher full access to the spirit and passion Miss Eckhart strove so diligently to uncover in her. Miss Eckhart, by contrast, as has already been shown, made herself at least translucent to Virgie alone, allowed her access to her feeling and range even to the point of vulnerability.

It is this vulnerability, of course, which Virgie at times seeks to avoid by constructing a wall around her identity. With time, however--and gradually--Virgie comes to realize that such a wall can be self-limiting as well, constricting her openness to otherness and denying her a full range of possibilities. In King MacLain, Virgie recognizes a man who will allow no such barriers to his identity and realizes that only he--in his own

transparency--can break through her defenses. "But Mr. King MacLain, an old man, had butted like a goat against the wall he wouldn't agree to himself or recognize. What fortress indeed would ever come down, except before hard little horns, a rush and a stampede of the pure wish to live? (452)

Yet Virgie herself, of her own accord, also deconstructs her own barriers. Even as a child, Virgie butted against walls, for Cassie remembers her beating her head against the school's basement wall while "the rest of the fourth grade stood around expectant and admiring" (291). As a young teen, she gives up literal walls and breaks boundaries through her music: only as she plays does she expose herself completely--her passion, intensity, and fullness brought into the open, her identity made transparent. Partially in rebellion against Miss Eckhart's attempts to control and force her talent, Virgie abandons her piano playing altogether and finds an unlikely substitution--milking cows. Westling points out that in the female cows' need to be milked, Virgie finds a parallel for her own need for release (Sacred Groves 102). Lessening the cows' burdens helps her to crumble the solid walls within her self, ultimately destroying their opacity and enabling the same transparency of feeling that she achieved through her music.

[T]he strength in her hands she used up . . . to pull the udders of the succeeding cows, as if she would hunt, hunt, hunt daily for the blindness that lay inside the beast, inside where she could have a real and living wall for beating on, a

solid prison to get out of, the most real
 stupidity of flesh, anguish for anguish. And if,
 as she dreamed one winter night, a new piano she
 touched had turned, after the one pristine moment,
 into a calling cow, it was by her own desire.
 (453--emphasis mine)

Virgie's mother's death further dissolves Virgie's
 opacity. "Always in a house of death," Virgie thinks, "all
the stories come evident, show forth from the person, become
 a part of the public domain. Not the dead's story, but the
 living's" (433--emphasis mine). Virgie knows that she is
 more exposed, more vulnerable, because of her mother's
 death, yet in her new transparency she is also able to see
 through others--their identities are newly opened to her.
 Watching Ran MacLain, for example, Virgie for the first time
 recognizes in him the same vital intensity she herself
 possesses, creating a connection inextricable and strong.
 "Virgie smiled faintly; now she felt, without warning, that
 two passionate people stood in this roomful, with their
 indifferent backs to each other" (445).

Similarly, as the mourners leave her home, Virgie
 imagines them as "drag[ging] some mythical gates and
 barriers away from her view" (439). The scene before her is
 newly expansive, with the distance "lighted" and the hills,
 river country, and fields in limitless succession. For
 those who planted them to mark property lines, the trees
 still "measured, broke, divided--Stark from Loomis from
 Spights from Holifield" (439), but for Virgie they are
 "frail screens" whose "half hair-fine skeleton[s]" allow the

autumn winds to pass through their frames. Pei considers Virgie's vision altered because she can now see the world for what it is, not through anyone else's perception of it (429). This expansiveness of vision and free transference parallel Virgie's own gradually increasing transparency of identity.

As the natural world is opened up to her, Virgie steps forward into it, leaving the boundaries and restrictions of the community behind. Elsewhere, too, these same connections between opacity and "civilization," transparency and nature, are made, as Virgie, at the end of "The Wanderers," considers the past and present of the town of MacLain.

The land across from the courtyard used to be Mr. Virgil MacLain's park. He was old Mr. King's father; he used to keep deer. Now like a callosity, a cataract of the eye over what was once transparent and bright--for the park racing with deer was an idea strangely transparent to Virgie--was the line of store fronts and the MacLain Bijou, and the cemetery that was visible on the cedar hill. (458)

Virgie walks through this open landscape to the river beyond. It is a natural step further to immerse herself in the smooth flow of the river, and as she does so, "she felt this matter a translucent one, the river, herself, the sky all vessels which the sun filled" (440). Clearly, here Virgie does not need to butt against walls any longer, but can slide effortlessly into the water (Pei 431). Floating, this translucence infuses her, and with the "withdrawals of

some bondage that might have been dear, now dismembering and losing itself," Virgie feels also "the vanishing opacity of her will" (440).

Wonderfully, though part of what Virgie allows to flow from her is her lived relationship with her mother, their spiritual kinship is not dissolved. Following her swim, Virgie returns to her house and looks into Katie's room, where her mother's body is laid out upon the bed. Virgie describes Katie's figure as venturing forth on a similar voyage, in which she too becomes transparent, blending into the sky: "From the hall she looked into her mother's room. The window and the room were the one blue of first-dark. Only the black dress, the density of skirt, was stamped on it, like some dark chip now riding mid-air on blue lakes" (441).

Having wandered in spirit her whole life, Virgie begins her physical wandering at the end of "The Wanderers." Richard Moreland argues that there is "something amiss" in Virgie's leaving a community she at last comprehends, that her attitude is "uncharacteristic" in taking this step (90). However, Virgie's decision to me seems very much in keeping with her life-long refusal to be limited, and her more complete understanding of the community members is perhaps more reason to leave them.

Taking no possessions with her and "decid[ing] to leave when she heard herself say so" (450), Virgie leaves her home

where "the branches [of the chinaberry tree] spread winglike in a breeze that meant change" (451) and heads for the town of MacLain, seven miles away. It is an appropriate stopover in a journey that will never end: "Could she ever be, would she be, where she was going?" (459) There, in the town named for the family that begat a fellow wanderer, Virgie sits on a stile--suggestive of transition--with an autumn rain falling upon her. Lowry Pei notes the intriguing fact that there are only four rainy days in The Golden Apples, three of which involve Virgie. In addition to this scene, it is raining when as a child Virgie bangs her head against the school basement's walls and when Miss Eckhart performs before Virgie, Cassie, and Jinny Love. Pei suggests that Virgie's last name "is intended to convey her born connection with a force that accompanies critical moments" (430).

The features of MacLain Virgie most loves reflect the qualities most dear in her self. "[T]he uncrowded water tank, catching the first and last light" suggests the range of the place, while the churchyard bell, "as heavy as a fallen meteor," indicates both distance and otherness. The courthouse, too--"space itself"--with four faces, each looking out in a different direction, is a particularly fine representation of Virgie's own freedom and multiplicity of choice (457). Virgie sits under the "open shelter" (458--emphasis mine) of live oak trees, whose "whole rainlighted

spread roof of green leaves . . . [move] like children's lips in speech, high up" (458), another emblem of Virgie's unsuppressed voice and irrepressible life.

As she sits, comfortable in straddling possibilities on the stile, Virgie thinks of a picture that once hung on Miss Eckhart's wall--a picture of Perseus in the act of cutting off the Medusa's head. Remembering the picture, Virgie is able to come to terms with her relationship with Miss Eckhart and to further expand her identity by including the one woman she previously would not admit to her self.

In contemplating the severing of head from body, Virgie comes to realize that the "horror in life, that was at once the horror in love" is its "separateness" (460). If a horrifying aspect of life and love, it is still a necessary and real element. Virgie has long believed and has "never doubted" (452) that "opposites," such as the closeness of love and separateness, not only often coexist but are in fact inextricable, necessary contradictions which add to the fullness of life and experience. Thus Virgie's fuller understanding in this moment on the stile is not a "resolution of the contrasts Welty is always dealing with" (Moreland 88--emphasis mine) but a decision to allow contradictions to remain as contradictions. As Elaine Pugh puts it, "there is no struggle for either/or, but the coexistence, the necessity of both/and" (449). These

"oppositions" "double upon themselves," multiplying but never subtracting from identity.

Virgie never saw it differently, never doubted that all the opposites on earth were close together, love close to hate, living to dying; but of them all, hope and despair were the closest blood--unrecognizable one from the other sometimes, making moments double upon themselves, and in the doubling double again, amending but never taking back. (452-53)

The veracity of Virgie's understanding is illustrated even in Virgie's present position. She shares the stile with an old black woman: they are "alone and together" under the private shelter of a "public tree" (461).

Virgie realizes that "she must believe in the Medusa equally with Perseus" (460), acknowledge both sides of the struggle as she must admit all sides of love and life. She must identify with both the hero and the victim, recognize that both aspects exist within her. In so doing, Virgie dissolves the subject/object split of the pictured struggle and allows Medusa, Perseus, and herself to retain both positions (Mark 7). "Perseus' heroism is dependent upon Medusa: he is nothing without her. For Virgie the two figures are inseperable; her impulse is toward the reconciliation of opposites, the acceptance of contraries" (Coldwell 434). Though I see Virgie as interested only in accepting contraries rather than reconciling them, Coldwell's point seems otherwise well taken.

And, in fact, Virgie does see this fullness and multiplicity of being in the mythical characters and in her

self. Virgie sees depth in the picture: it is to her not a flat representation, a single moment in time, or even a single stroke of a sword. Virgie sees Perseus and Medusa as existing beyond the captured moment, and thus frees the strugglers from their "frame": "Around the picture . . . was a frame enameled with flowers, which was always self-evident--Miss Eckhart's pride. In that moment Virgie had shorn it of its frame" (459-60). Patricia Yaeger cites the same passage, adding that Virgie has "altered their reflections, released them from their frames, allowing language to express something more powerful: the 'fire' in women's minds that it has sought to contain" ("Dialogic Imagination" 576). It is her own ability to see multiple identities in herself and others which makes the two figures into a "constellation" to be repeatedly and variably interpreted. "[B]eyond the beauty and the sword's stroke and the terror lay their existence in time--far out and endless, a constellation which the heart could read over many a night" (460).

For the first time, Virgie admits that Miss Eckhart also participated in the same plurality that Virgie cultivates in her self, and that their relationship was marked by the same necessary contradictions that Virgie has just identified in the picture. Virgie for years believed that she had hated Miss Eckhart; in this moment she recognizes that she "had come near to loving" her too (460).

Miss Eckhart, Virgie now realizes, also felt both love and hatred for her, and had been both her hero and her victim. This sometimes painful fullness of identity fueled the "fire in her head" and made possible the intensity and power of her playing. With all this fullness within her, still there is more before her--"all Beethoven": "She [Miss Eckhart] had absorbed the hero and the victim and then, stoutly, could sit down to the piano with all Beethoven ahead of her" (460).

It is this capacity to contain and then release an almost limitless range of identity that Miss Eckhart extends to Virgie. This she does through offering Virgie "her Beethoven" (460--emphasis mine), for through this music she expresses all that she is capable of being or experiencing. "With her hate, with her love, and with the small gnawing feelings that ate them, she offered Virgie her Beethoven. She offered, offered, offered" (460). Virgie, with her even greater capacity for plurality, takes even more than is offered: the Beethoven, the "overflow" of "the dragon's blood":

[S]he had taken Miss Eckhart's hate, and then her love, extracted them, the thorn and then the overflow--had hung the picture on the wall for herself. . . . [A]nd when Virgie was young, in the strange wisdom of youth that is accepting of more than is given, she had accepted the Beethoven, as with the dragon's blood. (460--emphasis in original)

Thirty years later, sitting on a stile in the rain, Virgie admits that she has not been a good steward of that

offering, that gift. "That was the gift she had touched with her fingers that had drifted and left her" (460). This perhaps provides a further explanation for why Virgie is troubled by the country woman's gift of the night-blooming cereus. The woman offers the flower in tribute to Virgie's former musical skill (454), and the sight is a painful reminder of her self-inflicted loss.

Yet Virgie's abandonment of her musical talent is by no means a refusal of the passion and range it enables. Miss Eckhart's influence is still a vital force, as are Virgie's memories, and the fullness of being and openness she once expressed in a torrent of musical interpretation now flows from many different tributaries. As Peter Schmidt points out, Virgie's "imagination [is] her instrument," adding that her gift is not gone but just more internalized (185). However, neither is music a dried-up stream. In her memory, a tune, which almost certainly is the repeated phrases of Beethoven's Fur Elise, "softly lift[s], lift[s] of itself," offering to Virgie once again the infinite, the repeated subjective act, the full complement of identity she knew then. "Every time Perseus struck off the Medusa's head, there was the beat of time, and the melody. Endless the Medusa, and Perseus endless" (460).

In hearing both the beat and the melody of the music, Virgie realizes that both metronomic regularity and creative interpretation are necessary in expressing beauty and power

(Coldwell 434). It is what she has received from Miss Eckhart and what she has always possessed within her self which makes the music she now hears possible.

Welty re-writes the figure of Medusa, as Joan Coldwell suggests many women writers do, rejecting the mythological representation of her as monstrous and emphasizing instead her female power (423). Virgie's power takes many forms, not the least of which is her creative force. Appropriately, the Medusa is also associated with creativity through the fact that the blood from her severed head engendered Pegasus, the "symbol of artistic inspiration" (423). Coldwell regards Virgie as being the embodiment of Helene Cixous' Medusa, "the emblem of the woman who sees herself straight . . .[and] who can also laugh at herself" (432). Possessing a wide-ranging sense of self, refusing to be limited by convention and definition, opening herself fully to otherness, and allowing contradiction to exist within herself, Virgie is a multiplicitous Medusa, a woman who continues to grow and explore new regions of her self.

In the rain, which feeds the streams which feed the ocean's greater expanse beyond, Virgie senses the fullest measure of her identity. The rain which falls on her now, sitting on the stile, is a part of a greater reality which Virgie can imagine. If part of the air and the earth, it is also a part of her, and Virgie can feel her identity

enlarging, her spirit roaming, in the rain's "magical percussion" (461).

The rain of fall, maybe on the whole South, for all she knew on the everywhere. She stared into its magnitude. . . . [I]t was the air's and the earth's fuming breath, it could come and go. As if her own modesty could also fall upon her now, freely and coolly, outside herself and on the everywhere, she sat a little longer on the stile. . . . then she and the old beggar woman . . . listen[ed] to . . . the world beating in their ears. They heard through falling rain the running of the horse and bear, the stroke of the leopard, the dragon's crusty slither, and the glimmer and the trumpet of the swan. (460-61--emphases mine)

This final sentence brings together several of the recurring images of The Golden Apples; they are, as Lowry Pei points out, all distinctly other, all from beyond this limited world, and all wandering (432). Appropriately, they gather in Virgie's thoughts, who of all Welty's female characters is perhaps most capable of allowing their otherness to survive unneutralized within her. In another of her works, "A Still Moment," Welty gathers a similar group of creatures and suggests that identity can be enlarged and can remain constantly fluid through considering the beauty and intricacies of difference and by searching out endless variety.

But if it was his [Audobon's] identity he wished to discover, or if it was what a man had to seize beyond that, the way was by endless examination, by the care for every bird that flew in his path and every serpent that shone underfoot. Not one was enough; he looked deeper, on and on, as if for a particular beast or a legendary bird. (197)

Beyond MacLain, beyond Morgana, beyond any barriers at all, this transparent Rain(ey) moves on.

Without question, Virgie of all Welty's female protagonists is the woman who most completely possesses the qualities Welty associates with an expansive female identity. Welty referred to her in an interview as having "an awareness of the spaciousness and mystery of . . . living" (ConvW 342) and certainly this awareness opens Virgie to a vast realm of growth, passion, and otherness. In fact, in One Writer's Beginnings, Welty suggests that Virgie is so wide-ranging, so completely Other, that she exists in a region beyond even Welty's knowing. "[Virgie] is right outside me. She is powerfully like Miss Eckhart, her co-equal in stubborn and passionate feeling, while more expressive of it--but fully apart from me" (111). Yet, somewhat paradoxically, for these very reasons Virgie can be and is Welty's best subject--a product of her most powerful creative forces, yet a character who has life beyond her creator. "If somewhere in its course your work seems to you to have come into a life of its own, and you can stand back from it and leave it be, you are looking at your subject--so I feel. . . . Inasmuch as Miss Eckhart might have been said to come from me, the author, Virgie, in her moments, might have always been my subject" (111).

Virgie is a distant planet (a word derived from planetes, which means "wanderer"), who roams in no

particular orbit, certainly around no sun, but who multiplies and creates her own moving constellation of identity. If the other eight women described here (I exclude Jinny Love, who does not seek to add to her identity) have constellations with fewer or dimmer stars, still they are not singular, still they wander, change, shift, seek a wider range to their movement. Cassie, thinking specifically of Miss Eckhart and the "spectacular moments" and "hideous things" which are elements of her identity, imagines Miss Eckhart's identity as a series of planets which then multiply into constellations with turning and changing centers. The aspects of Miss Eckhart's identity which Cassie can "[divine] and [endure]" are a moving flux, "crossing the sky and setting, the way the planets did. Or they were more like whole constellations, turning at their very centers, maybe, . . . maybe upside down, but terribly recognizable. It was not just the sun and moon that traveled" (302). Cassie's thoughts, of course, can equally apply to several other women in The Golden Apples--including herself, as Cassie seems to acknowledge. "All kinds of things would rise and set in your own life, you could begin now to watch for them, roll back your head and feel their rays come down and reach your open eyes" (302). And, in fact, Cassie does imagine Cassiopeia/Cassie as one constellation in the sky, though

she is "in her chair," perhaps a recognition of her own reduced roaming (302).

This fluid movement, a willingness to change and grow and to try on different identities, is given several other expressions as well. Perhaps the most straightforward desire for fluidity is Nina's, when she imaginatively slips into different "skins," crossing boundaries of race, class, and gender in order to expand her perspective. Miss Eckhart also metaphorically moves herself through a range of transformations when she plays the piano. Her face marks her fluidity, changing from that of a woman to that of a mountain or "what might be seen behind the veil of a waterfall" (300)

The poem that runs through Cassie's head offers Cassie the same possibility for transformation: her "small, solemn, unprotected" self "of the crucial present" (287) both yearns for and resists "the face that was in the poem" (330)--the roving, unconstrained, open and expressive self she wants to be. Cassie's mother also has visions of change which fly beyond her reach. The swallows she watches with wistful eyes subtly suggest the freer, wider-ranging identity she seeks.

Both Virgie and Easter are associated with water--an actual fluidity which enables and represents the ease with which they can flow from one state of being to another. In the depths of Moon Lake, Easter moves inward, expressing an

identity which is unfathomable to the other campers. Virgie releases old identities as she accepts new ones in her river swim, opening herself to the possibility that "she might turn into something without feeling it shock her" (440).

Such fluidity, of course, involves a deliberate and willing openness to possibilities outside the self. Openness to otherness is thus another characteristic of Welty's multiplicitous women. Virgie's openness is furthered by her "transparency." By breaking down barriers which separate her from otherness, Virgie exposes herself to differences in perspective and experience. All she receives from Miss Eckhart, for example, is largely gained through Virgie's willingness to accept Miss Eckhart's foreignness and difference as difference without diminishing their power.

In her internal dialogue during siesta, Easter converses with an otherness so foreign to Nina and Jinny Love that they cannot comprehend it. Easter, however, experiences a "wholehearted and fateful concurrence with the thing dreamed" (350). Similarly, what Nina views as an invasive yet thrilling presence--the entry of the night into their tent--Easter welcomes unreservedly, beckoning this dark Other to come closer. Equally dramatic is Easter's mystery and depth during her resuscitation. Nina's own openness to otherness, of course, is demonstrated by the fact that she imagines such otherness in Easter and that she

is so drawn to Easter, who abounds in difference. Through her relationship with Easter, Nina discovers "the other way to live" for which she yearns (361).

Female sexuality is another avenue through which Virgie and other women of The Golden Apples open themselves to otherness. In the previous chapter, only Ruby Fisher and Jenny Lockhart use sexuality as a means of enlarging their identities; this is a much more fully developed possibility in The Golden Apples. In "The Wanderers" Virgie recalls her lovers, emphasizing their differences and the ways each has altered and added to her sense of self. Katie also, through vicariously participating in King MacLain's sexuality, can partake of some of his difference, enjoy a portion of his freedom through the range of her imagination. Mattie Will's involvement with MacLain is actual, and though she ultimately discovers sameness in MacLain's purported otherness, her own identity becomes Other in itself as a result of their encounter.

Multiplicity is given another, wonderfully expressive dimension in The Golden Apples which is virtually unexplored in Welty's other works of short fiction. Artistic and creative passion--specifically musical--is developed in this collection as a means of exploring the self, of expressing a full complement of emotion and intensity, and of giving voice to female energy and strength. Miss Eckhart and Virgie utilize this gift most fully. For both, it allows a

fluidity of identity, voices otherness which exists within and beyond them, and creates a connection of shared passion between them. Miss Eckhart, as Virgie much later realizes, embodies both the beat and the melody of the music; Virgie's beautiful improvisations upon each enrich both women.

Music has the same effect upon Cassie. Powerfully moved by Virgie's and Miss Eckhart's creative abandon and desperately wanting to express such passion herself, yet simultaneously terrified by passion's boundlessness and lack of stability and definition, Cassie is immobilized, caught between the tensions within her. Mrs. Morrison shares her daughter's desire. Her declaration to Cassie, "'Child, I could have sung'" reveals, however, that she has been thwarted in her expression of that desire.

Ultimately, Mrs. Morrison is a fallen star, as is Miss Eckhart, her fire extinguished, her corona singed. During their lifetimes, however, both had brilliance, motion, and intensity. Inexplicably, Nina also, though she had opened herself to a vast range of being, eventually becomes earthbound, defined and limited by convention. Cassie remains "a lesser . . . gleam" (328), still burning with her desire to be a part of the multitudinous expanse, yet limiting her own constellation. She remains "Cassiopeia in her Chair." Katie (even in death), Snowdie, and Mattie Will shine on with a steady golden glow, a fiery determination to let nothing compromise their light. Easter (as far as we

are told) and Virgie are bright, wheeling constellations moving through an expanse of sky, changing location and position with the seasons, yet ever-present. The Golden Apples brings together these individual stars, connects them in constellations of relationship and shared desire, and most importantly, allows each woman her own expansion, fullness, and variety, her own story told as a "fluctuation of starlight."

Notes

¹ Patricia Yaeger is adamant in her insistence that the sexual encounter between Mattie Will and King MacLain is only imagined by Mattie Will, a product of a bored wife's daydreaming ("Dialogic Imagination" 568). The sole basis for her claim seems to be a fragment which appears at the close of the story's first section: "She would think afterwards, married, when she had the time to sit down--churning, for instance" (333). To hold such a view based on rather flimsy evidence robs Mattie Will of much of the power she is invested with throughout the story, as Yaeger admits, the story becoming "a lyric of sexual subordination in which only King's sons can inherit his freedom and power" (572).

² This acceptance may be a key to the major difference between Faulkner's and Welty's otherwise similar image: Welty's view of woman's relationship to sexuality is affirmative, while Faulkner's response is revulsion.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

Given the predominance of representations of a core identity in Porter's fiction and of a multiplicitous identity in Welty's fiction, it is perhaps not surprising to find that both Porter's and Welty's own identities, at least as they have been reported, share their respective female characters' features. Judging from Joan Givner's portrayal of Porter in her biography and from the representations Porter gave of herself in interviews, Porter during her lifetime sought to order her life, to maintain an intact center of being; Welty, as she presents herself in interviews, seems to stress integration less and variety more. I will conclude by considering how Porter's and Welty's different identity needs can be traced in their responses to their gender, their views of the South, and their practice of and attitudes toward writing.

Because my analyses examine so closely the gender issues both authors dealt with in their fiction, it seemed particularly appropriate to consider Porter's and Welty's personal attitudes toward their gender. In addition, Porter's and Welty's radically different attitudes toward the South seemed to me quite closely tied to each author's formulation of her identity. Finally, to explore the

influence of both women's conception of identity upon the process of their writing--not only the product--seemed to me to give an inclusive scope to this study. I make no claim or effort to be exhaustive in my examination of these areas; my intent is only to suggest further expressions of each author's view of identity, suggestions which will perhaps prompt further consideration of these areas.

First, however, a general understanding of each woman's formulation of her own identity is necessary in order to provide a framework for her attitudes about gender, region, and writing.

Porter referred to her own identity as "that mysterious center in which all my experience seems to take, finally" and as a "strong core" (qtd. in Brinkmeyer, "'Endless Remembering'" 14). It is a sense of self that Porter apparently carried with her throughout most, if not all, of her life, for in an interview with Barbara Thompson in 1963, Porter comments,

It's astonishing how little I've changed: nothing in my point of view or my way of feeling. . . . [M]y point of view, my being, is strangely unchanged. We change, of course, every day; we are not the same people who sat down at this table, yet there is a basic and innate being that is unchanged. (ConvP 96)

Cristina Maria Teixeira also notes Porter's belief that a person's identity is determined by the age of ten. She quotes Porter as saying that "'the rest is merely confirmation, extension, development. Childhood is the

fiery furnace in which we are melted down to essentials and that essential shaped for good'" (43). Identity is, to Porter, an essence, a core. It is a core, nevertheless, that Porter felt she must protect against dispersion and disorder. Porter claimed never to have been part of the "lost generation" because "I'll be damned if ever I was lost. I always knew where I was" (ConvP 104), yet in the same conversation she admits to a sense of wrong direction. "I don't think we were lost, straying off somewhere like witless children in the woods; we merely had to work at finding our right way" (104). Elsewhere she writes of the same period and presents herself as successfully defending herself against the chaos and disorder of a war-torn world, where newness and change are presented almost as enemies to her ordered sense of self:

'I had had time to grow up, to consider, to look again, to begin finding my way a little through the inordinate clutter and noise of my immediate day, in which very literally everything in the world was being pulled apart, torn up, turned wrong side out and upside down; almost no frontiers left unattacked, governments and currencies falling; even the very sexes seemed to be changing back and forth and multiplying weird, unclassifiable genders. And every day, in the arts, as in schemes of government and organized crime, there was, there had to be, something New.' (qtd. in Brinkmeyer, "'Endless Remembering'" 6--emphases mine)

This chaos, Porter states clearly in the quote below, is not specific only to war time, but characterizes all of human life. Again, she speaks of the necessity of maintaining an

intact, unwavering sense of self through this confusion and disorder which threatens to destroy that integrated self:

There seems to be a kind of order in the universe, in the movement of the stars and the turning of the earth and the changing of the seasons, and even in the cycle of human life. But human life itself is almost pure chaos. . . . Quite often the best we can do is to keep our heads, and try to keep at least one line unbroken and unobstructed. (ConvP 94)

Porter also tended to regard relationships as a major threat to her unity and coherence of self. Repeatedly in interviews Porter speaks of "the terrible stress and strain of human relations" (ConvP 112), the tendency of people to "hurt each other and injure each other and [be] cruel to each other in small, cowardly ways" (ConvP 113), emphasizing the negative attributes of relationship in notable contrast to Eudora Welty's stress on the beneficial. As might be expected given Porter's own series of failed marriages, romantic involvement is the object of her most pointed attacks. Kindest in her characterization of men as "a little tiresome . . . a little bossy" (ConvP 77) in love, and most virulent in her portrayal of them as ruthlessly demanding, Porter consistently presents such relationships as restrictive and depleting:

I know that when a woman loves a man, she builds him up and supports him and helps him in every possible way to live . . . I never knew a man who loved a woman enough for this. He cannot help it, it is his deepest instinct to destroy, quite often subtly, insidiously, but constantly and endlessly, her very center of being, her confidence in herself as a woman. (Letters 549--my emphasis)

The cause for much of Porter's bitterness toward relationship is her conviction that connection interferes with a woman's individual potential--in her case, a conflict between relationship and artistic development.

What I find most dreadful among the young artists is this tendency toward middle-classness--this idea that they have to get married and have lots of children and live just like everyone else, you know? Now, I am all for human life, and I am all for marriage and children and all that sort of thing, but quite often you can't have that and do what you were supposed to do, too. Art is a vocation, as much as anything in this world. . . . But we [artists] really do lead almost a monastic life, you know; to follow it you very often have to give up something. (ConvP 86)

Porter seemed to form a sort of alternative relationship with her work, a relationship which, as I will later show, was not disordering but consistent and integrative. "But this thing between me and my writing is the strongest bond I have ever had--stronger than any bond or any engagement with any human being or with any other work I've ever done" (ConvP 79).

Eudora Welty, contrasting her two friends, Elizabeth Bowen and Porter, commented on Porter's essential withholding of self from those around her, her reticence to "take in" the different lives surrounding her. Speaking with Albert Devlin and Peggy Whitman Prenshaw, Welty noted that "Katherine Anne might enjoy having a circle around her, but there she really remained within herself. Elizabeth was the opposite; she was an in-taker. She just took everything in" (491).

This "in-taking" also characterizes Welty and her conception of identity as multiplicitous; relationality is, in fact, the greatest enabler of the fullness and range of Welty's own identity. Speaking of the skills which inform and make her writing possible, Welty comments that a fundamental ability must be that

you will be attentive to life, not closed to it but open to it--to genuinely try to see it for what it is to you[.] . . . So I also think attentiveness and care for the world, a feeling of concern and a wish to connect with it. . . . above everything . . . is . . . feeling that life is worth your giving everything you have to it.
(ConvW 261-62--Welty's emphasis)

This fluency of exchange--giving all of the self to life and receiving all of life back, to add to the self--adds depth and variety to identity and involves the same openness to otherness that Welty's most successful female protagonists demonstrate. Peggy Whitman Prenshaw suggests that Welty's own engagement of otherness through relationship may originate in her parents' differences (648). Welty's parents' marriage, Welty suggests in One Writer's Beginnings, was a partnership in which opposites coexisted without dulling the keenness of either's differences. Welty's connection with her parents, Prenshaw implies, exposed her to otherness and allowed her, as their child, to make their otherness a part of her. "Welty's relationship to her parents casts much light upon certain persistent themes in her fiction, particularly the existence of the

mysterious otherness that lies below the surface of self" (648).

Welty elsewhere elaborates that for her "all experience is an enrichment instead of an impoverishment. My own relationships with people are the things that mean the most to me. . . . I think the more [relationships] the better" (ConvW 151). In her emphasis upon relationship, however, Welty does not deny the importance and reality of the individual: "At all times, I'm interested in individuals, as you may have gathered, and in personal relationships, which to me are the things that matter; personal relationships matter more than any kind of generalizations about the world at large" (ConvW 57). Not surprisingly, then, it is his love of "the singularity in people, the individuality" and his "[taking] for granted the sense of family" that Welty most admires in Chekhov (ConvW 83). Welty comments that relationship is impossible without an awareness of one's individual identity. Yet this individuality is not an intact, inviolate center, but an interactive, fluid self. When Welty speaks of being "very real in yourself" in the quote below, she seems not to be identifying an essential self, but rather makes the point that identity exists outside of relationship as well as within it--that it is not formed exclusively through relation. In short, relationship cannot multiply identity unless individual identity is open to the exchange and

augmentation: "It [relationality] involves both a submerging and a triumph of the individual, because you can't really conceive of the whole unless you are an identity. Unless you are very real in yourself, you don't know what it means to support others or to join with them or to help them" (ConvW 53).

With this general description of each author's conception of identity and relationality's influence upon identity, it is now possible to discuss how each author's identity influences her views on gender, the South, and the writing process. Unlike Porter, Welty refuses to consider gender as particularly relevant or to define gender in any fixed way, either by using conventional formulations of gender differences or by adhering to some sort of biological essentialism. Responding to a questionnaire which asked, "Compared to men, women are more/less/about as emotional, etc.?" Welty replied, "As emotional; more competitive; less passive, rational, sincere; as strong, violent" (ConvW 40). Welty thus does not deny that gender differences exist, yet she does not believe that these differences are categorical, dichotomous, or able to be typed. Two years later, in a more thoughtful and revelatory statement, Welty is more explicit about her response to her gender, revealing her belief in the irreducibility of gender, its ability to transcend itself through imagination:

I am a woman. In writing fiction, I think imagination comes ahead of sex. A writer's got to be able to live inside all characters: male,

female, old, young. To live inside any other person is the jump. Whether the persons are male or female is subordinate. . . . I couldn't feel less deprived as a woman to be writing, and I certainly enjoy all the feelings of any other human being. The full complement is available. I have the point-of-view of a woman, but if I'm not able to imagine myself into what another human being who is a man might feel . . . well, it's just from poverty of imagination. It's a matter of imagination, not sex. (ConvW 58-59)

Welty clearly does not view herself, particularly as a writer, as being limited by her gender but as having access to "the full complement" of human experience. While never denying her identity as a female ("I am a woman"), Welty refuses to accept restriction and closure as concomitant to that identity. She can, in short, identify with multiple possibilities, adding them all to her experience and to her identity.

Porter, however, is not so expansive in her conception of gender.

When men ask me how I know so much about men, I've got a simple answer: everything I know about men, I've learned from men. If there is such a thing as a man's mind and a woman's mind--and I'm sure there is--it isn't what most critics mean when they talk about the two . . . But I haven't ever found it unnatural to be a woman . . . Oh, I suppose everything in my life had to do with being female. (ConvP 94, 178)

Convinced that there are dichotomized realms of gendered "being"--as is shown by her firm belief in the existence of men's and women's "minds"--Porter cannot conceive of her identity as existing beyond her femaleness ("everything in my life had to do with being female"). Consequently,

whatever falls outside this distinctly female range (such as maleness) is regarded as at least partially foreign, able to be experienced only vicariously. In a letter to Edward Schwartz, Porter expands on the limitations of gender.

There are so many women . . . who wish loudly that they had been born men, simply because they have been taught that men have more freedom, in every direction. What they really want, I think, is not a change of sex, but a change of the limited conditions of their lives which have been imposed because of their sexual functions. (Letters 548)

Though at first this passage may seem anti-essentialist, with Porter making a distinction between sex, which cannot really be changed, and gender, which can, this does not seem to be Porter's intent, as a further reading of the letter reveals. Porter goes on to say that "men are not free either, and exactly on the grounds of their sexual functions." She then lists some of man's limitations, which she implies are innate and inescapable, including his "sexual vanity," his "terrible organic need to be pre-potent in bed," and his drive for control and a sense of superiority. Thus when Porter writes of "the limited conditions of [women's] lives which have been imposed because of their sexual functions," her implication seems to be that women (and men) are necessarily and unavoidably restricted by their "sexual functions." Porter later objects to the use of the term effeminate to refer to some men, calling it an "insult aimed at the very core of [woman's] existence, their sexual life as women," a comment

which possibly suggests that the foundation of female--and male--identity for Porter is their sexuality or at least their sense of themselves as distinctly male or female. Later in the same letter, for example, Porter equates woman's "center of being" with "her confidence in herself as woman" (549). In contrast to Porter's view of sexuality as a foundation of difference, Welty seems to regard it as an opening into an experience of otherness. Welty thus celebrates the intercourse between self and other through sexuality, while Porter sees sexuality as defining and limiting gender possibilities.

Even when Porter seems to draw away from traditional gender definitions to describe women, there is woven throughout her comments the implication of limitation, the suggestion that women must stay true to some essential form of femaleness, an implication which undermines her claims for female expansiveness. Note in particular my emphases in the following passage:

Strength--of body or mind or character or talent-- is not a matter of sex. A woman who knows how to be a woman not only needs and must have an active force of character and mind, but she has invariably, I have never known it to fail, an intense self-respect, precisely for herself [Porter's emphasis], her attributes and functions as a female, and I never knew a woman worth her self who really wanted to be a man. What she wants is the right really [Porter's emphasis] to be a woman, and not a kind of image doing and saying what she is expected to say . . . (Letters 549)

Again, Porter's need for stability and order, for an integrated identity, may explain her tendency to reinstate an abstract idea of "womanhood" while purporting to redefine the traditional definition. Perhaps she believed that the solidity and knowability of a well-defined gender would give her an internal sense of order. Certainly, Porter felt disturbed and disordered, for example, by the gender convolutions brought on by World War II. As we saw earlier, she felt that "even the very sexes seemed to be changing back and forth and multiplying weird, unclassifiable genders" (qtd. in Brinkmeyer, "'Endless Remembering'" 6--emphasis mine).

Yet the order which Porter perhaps sought to attain through strictly defining gender did not come to her easily; her claim that she had "never found it unnatural to be a woman" (ConvP 94) seems false. As the following quotation makes clear, Porter recognized that the adoption of a conventional, well-established gender definition could be equally disordering. This passage, from an interview conducted by Barbara Thompson, reveals the extent to which Porter invested in a traditional southern model of femininity and simultaneously reveals her dissatisfaction with the fragmentation it could cause. Thompson's question, followed by Porter's response, is given here.

I[interviewer]: But haven't you found that being a woman presented to you, as an artist, certain special problems? It seems to me that a great deal of the upbringing of women encourages the dispersion of the self in many small bits, and

that the practice of any kind of art demands a corraling and concentrating of that self and its always insufficient energies.

P[orter]: I think that's very true and very right. You're brought up with the notion of feminine chastity and inaccessibility, yet with the curious idea of feminine availability in all spiritual ways, and in giving service to anyone who demands it. And I suppose that's why it has taken me twenty years to write this novel; it's been interrupted by just anyone who could jimmy his way into my life. (ConvP 94-95)

Porter's response hints at the very problematic relationship she had with her gender and with the South which, in very unexpected ways, had shaped her ideas of femininity. For Porter throughout her life vacillated between adopting and rejecting the image of the southern belle as central to her female identity. Porter consistently buried her distinctly non-aristocratic upbringing, characterized by poverty, minimal education, and nominal exposure to culture, supplanting these "old terrible time[s]" (Givner, Life 62) with a fictional history, replete with wealth, culture, education, and social distinction--all the trappings of the mythological plantation South and of its symbol, the southern lady. As Joan Givner, Porter's biographer, explains it,

. . . she produced simultaneously with her stories another work of art. She transformed herself and her own personal history. In the place of Callie Porter, raised in poverty and obscurity, she created Katherine Anne Porter, an aristocratic daughter of the Old South and the descendant of a long line of distinguished statesmen. In this reincarnation she became one of the most celebrated personalities of the American literary scene. . . . With her magnolia skin, her velvety voice and white hair, she presented the perfect image of a southern belle, a member, as she styled

herself, of the "guilt-ridden white pillar crowd."
(Life 17-18)

This creation, however, seems fraught with paradox. Rejecting reality in favor of an initially more palatable if fictional past, Porter on occasion disclaimed connection even with the fiction. For example, though she affiliates herself in the quotation Givner uses above with the "guilt-ridden white pillar crowd," she follows the statement with the claim that "it just didn't rub off on me" (ConvP 83). In another interview, Porter complains that reporters too often "wanted to know something trivial or frivolous, wanted to make a southern belle of me" (ConvP 182). These disclaimers were evidently accepted by at least one interviewer, Archer Winsten, who wrote of Porter that she is "a woman trained in the Southern tradition, rebel though she was. But she has broken with the class from which she came, completely" (ConvP 11). Curious too is the fact that though Porter painstakingly fabricated an alternate history for herself, and guarded that history against revelation of the real during her lifetime, she nevertheless "scrupulously preserved and accumulated the paraphernalia of her lifetime" (Givner, Life 21) which revealed a considerable amount of the past she so long struggled to hide. Givner, author of the Porter biography that first revealed "what her life was" and editor of the interviews which portray her life as "it should have been" (ConvP ix-x), perhaps is most cognizant of this contradiction:

Porter was torn between wishing to be an accomplished, independent woman, speaking out authoritatively on literature and world events, and wishing to be a charmingly capricious belle, sought after for her beauty and arousing chivalrous thoughts in every male breast. (ConvP xiv)

These paradoxes, however, can perhaps be reconciled when examined in the light of Porter's conception of identity, her need for a stabilized core of being. It may at first seem yet another paradox to consider Porter's ability to transform herself so completely as evidence of her need for an integrated core identity: such an ability seems more a characteristic of Welty's fluid multiplicity. However, a close look at the purposes of Porter's self-transformation allows it to be understood as an aspect of her sense of core identity.

Clearly, Porter's past was a painful memory she chose to deny, and her fabricated history was not merely what she wished were true, but what she felt should have been true, indicating that the latter somehow meshed more completely with her interior sense of self. Givner, in her biography of Porter, expertly delineates Porter's feelings of confusion, restlessness, and fragmentation in connection with her childhood (Life, Chapter 2). It is completely understandable, then, that she would create an alternate history which she hoped would provide her with the wholeness, integration, and solid definition which she so craved. That this was her purpose seems evident in a

comment she made in reference to the background we now know to be a fiction: "I was brought up in this quite curious way of knowing exactly who you were and what you were" (ConvP 164). Givner directly compares Porter's self-creation with her writing process, hinting at the identity need which compelled both.

She edited the story of her life as she might have shaped one of her short stories, rejecting certain experiences which she felt should not have happened and did not really belong to her and substituting others which seemed more appropriate. She rarely invented anecdotes out of thin air, but rather created around actual circumstances a tissue of fantasies which embroidered and transformed them and gave them back to her in a form she could bear to contemplate. (Life 20--emphasis mine)

In my opinion, Porter's need to maintain an integrated core of being, or at least her belief in it, explains her decision to leave the South, for at age twenty-nine she left the South permanently, living thereafter a nomadic life in several states and foreign cities. Quite possibly, living in the South was a constant reminder of a past which was too fractured and confused to permit her an ordered sense of self. Less speculatively, Porter abandoned the South because, in her opinion, it would not allow her, as a woman, the right to write, the act which most provided a sense of wholeness and integration for Porter. She more than once, and at spans of several years, remarked on the restrictiveness of the South to her writing. "I had to leave the South because I didn't want to be regarded as a

freak. That was how they regarded a woman who tried to write. I had to make a revolt, a rebellion" (ConvP 10).

For similar reasons, she objected to being called a regional writer, stating on one occasion her belief that there is no "first rate person who is a regional writer. . . . I think we ought to drop two words: Americanism and regionalism. They are coins with the design rubbed off. They are cramping people with perfectly good instincts" (ConvP 34). Only when "the regional, the particular, [is] used in such a way that the meaning is universal" (31) could region be considered redeeming. For the most part, Porter considered the South as too restrictive to her writing, too fraught with confusion to allow her a sense of wholeness.

Therefore, the South does not figure into Porter's fiction as prominently as it does for Welty. But when it does, it is usually the South of Porter's fictionalized history, a southern background which allowed her to imagine a direct and unwavering line from past to present or future, a South whose culture and advantages could produce a successful writer, even if she was a woman. It is this South to which Porter probably refers when she says, "I do feel an intense sense of location and of background and my tradition and my country exist to me" (ConvP 45). Porter, however, has a different explanation for the infrequency of southern settings in her fiction, though it is an explanation which does not contradict my theory of the South

as disruptive of Porter's sense of integration. The last sentence of the following quotation, in fact, hints at Porter's need for distance from the real South that disturbed her sense of wholeness and unity.

I have never really stuck to [the South] in my writing because I have lived too nomadic a life. . . . I write out of my own background about what I know but I can't stay in one place. I write about a country maybe ten years after I have been in it. (ConvP 45-46)

Thus Porter variously sets her stories in Mexico ("Maria Concepcion," "Virgin Violeta," "The Martyr," "That Tree," "Flowering Judas," "Hacienda"), in Germany ("The Leaning Tower"), or in sections of the United States other than the South ("Theft," "The Cracked Looking-Glass," "A Day's Work," "The Downward Path to Wisdom," "Pale Horse, Pale Rider"). Her most commercially successful work, the novel Ship of Fools, manages to be set in no particular place at all, but on a ship crossing the waters between New Orleans and Germany. As such, it perhaps serves as an appropriate metaphor for Porter's various efforts to escape from her chaotic southern past.

The inclusion of southernness in Welty's concept of identity is not nearly as problematic. It is rare for a Welty work not to be set in the South, suggesting a comfortableness with her region and an easy assimilation of place into identity. Over the years, Welty has freely spoken of the role of place in the formation of her own and her characters' identities, seeing it as enabling of all the

qualities she values the most as aspects of identity. This is obviously quite different from Porter's views. Speaking of the South's love of storytelling, Welty comments

But I think beneath all of that [storytelling] is a sense, really, of caring about one another. It is a pleasure and an entertainment, but it's also something of deep significance to people. . . . In a way, I think Southerners care about each other, about human beings, in a more accessible way than some other peoples. We can reach our feelings more easily. (ConvW 183)

In another interview, Welty expands on the voice and relationality which the South, to her, allows. Particularly interesting is her suggestion that the South adds to her identity, making her "'more than an individual,'" a part of an ever-expanding chain of connection, and giving her access to a continually-widening range of perception and interpretation. These capabilities are, of course, characteristics of the multiplicity which Welty's female characters display.

'One of the most marvelous things is hearing all these stories and getting a sense of family and continuity. It is the world of memory. Through all these stories everything that happens can be kept and repeated and maybe understood later on.

'Because of all that, I feel I am a link in a chain. Somehow I am a part of all this, more than an individual.' (ConvW 385)

Even the metaphors which Welty uses to describe the influence of place on identity-formation clarify that place is for her not inhibitive. She speaks of region as the ground, rooting, or foundation (ConvW 176) which facilitates a growth that transcends place, growth that blooms into

multiple possibilities for identity: "If you ground the characters authentically, then they have a place from which to take off and do what you need them to do dramatically" (ConvW 314).

Your characters grow out of place, and that's the way you test them as to their validity and their propriety in your work. . . . It's the fountainhead of [their] knowledge and experience. I think, of course, we learn to grow further than that [background]; but if we don't have that base I don't know what we can test further knowledge by. (ConvW 176-77)

Robert H. Brinkmeyer, Jr. insightfully refers to Welty's perception of place as "an openness to otherness," noting that place for Welty does not limit and define so much as "[open] up a person to profound and mysterious feelings within and without" ("Openness to Otherness" 72). Brinkmeyer cites Welty's own comments that "[place] never really stops informing us, for it is forever astir, alive, changing, reflecting, like the mind of man itself" as proof of this claim. To accept place as other, as outside of self, yet to assimilate it also as a part of the self, allowing it to expand one's sense of self and of others, is to accord to region its own multiplicity.

Obviously, Welty's view of the South rejects its more common portrayal as restrictive; she seems unburdened by the South's racism, sexism, or class struggles. This seems to be because Welty does not regard place as only a social and geographic location, but as a sensitivity to the physical environment. "'Our [southerners'] concept of Place isn't

just history or philosophy; it's a sensory thing of sights and smells and seasons and earth and sky as well'" (qtd. in Brinkmeyer, "Openness to Otherness" 72). As Brinkmeyer adds, "this sense is rather a far-reaching feeling, even a passion" (72).

Welty's sense of place clearly enables and informs her writing with its fullness and expansiveness, aspects of her understanding of identity. Her attitudes toward the act of writing reveal similar values. In One Writer's Beginnings, for example, Welty writes that while at college she "felt the need to hold transient life in words--there's so much more of life that only words can convey--strongly enough to last me as long as I lived" (92). Put differently, words for Welty are a way of possessing more of life, of expressing the many different sides of the world and of her own identity. A writer must, to Welty, "compose the inside out of all [the] world's different colors and moods and varieties of viewpoint" (Devlin and Prenshaw 438). Welty conveys a sense of the scope she experiences as she writes when she comments that "[a]s long as you are writing a story, its possibilities are endless" (ConvW 364).

The fullness and variety of Welty's writing are qualities often praised by critics. Brinkmeyer attributes the beauty of Welty's texts to the passion which creates them, a passion so strong in Welty that it gives her works a depth and expansiveness others may lack. Brinkmeyer quotes

Welty: "'The real dramatic force of a story depends on the strength of the emotion that set it going. The emotional value is the measure of the reach of the story'" ("Openness to Otherness" 75). Ruth Vande Kieft similarly lauds Welty's "doubleness" of vision and the multiplicity and variety of her style and content ("Visited and Revisited" 457). Peggy Prenshaw points out that writing is for Welty a way of preserving "the past, the family, one's youth" and joining them with "the ever-changing, revealing outside world" ("Antiphonies" 650): a way, in short, of encompassing past, present, and future, interior and exterior realities, and of allowing them all to change, shift, and become different things.

This aspect of change is as crucial to Welty's philosophy of writing as it is to her conception of identity.

I do see a story, feel a story, as a whole before I ever begin the process of thinking how to work it out[.] . . . It is a whole, but also, if it has any vitality, it allows changing in working toward it. It has to be flexible. To be alive it has to remain always capable of moving and growing itself, in the work. (ConvW 258).

This change, however, must be purposeful movement, movement towards something, or it is only "lost" rambling; not surprisingly, Welty believes movement must work toward connection with others, the greatest enabler of multiplicity in her self and the direction of and for all her writing.

I think the novel can do about anything it wishes to do, but I don't think it can stand still. I don't think it can be static, and I don't think

that it can get along without finding a line of communication that is indelible[.] . . . If a novel does not connect with us, it's lost. (ConvW 260)

To Welty, this connection is not limited to the attachment we feel towards a text, or even to the relationships which exist between characters in a work, but also suggests her interaction with her own text as she is in the process of creating it. Brinkmeyer cites Welty's description of the act of writing as a "'leap into the dark,'" a willingness to move beyond the familiar into the range of the other ("Openness to Otherness" 76). This otherness, of course, grows from the self, is part of the self, yet is also other than the self, with a separate existence. By creating characters who are different from herself, Welty opens herself to otherness and expands her own identity by incorporating their differences into her self.

What I do in writing of any character is to try to enter into the mind, heart, and skin of a human being who is not myself. Whether this happens to be a man or a woman, old or young, with skin black or white, the primary challenge lies in making the jump itself. It is the act of a writer's imagination that I set most high. (Preface xi)

It is an especially wonderful aspect of Welty's attitude toward her characters that she does not consider their reality as wholly dependent on her creation. Rather, she acknowledges the independent voices of her characters and of herself, and presents dialogue as the ultimate form of communication, allowing as it does a subject/object

interchange. That is, Welty as creator/subject can converse with her creation/objects while simultaneously granting them a subjectivity which allows them a reciprocal voice. Through this interchange, both subject and object complete their full range of artistic possibility, enabling them to experience both sides of the page, so to speak. This process, to Welty, is "the joy of writing" (jouissance?), her response when Joanna Maclay questioned if "once the story begins, once you and the story begin together, there is a kind of dialogue between you and the story. You're talking to it and it's talking back to you" (ConvW 318).

Perhaps one of the best measures of the expansiveness of Welty's writing is the variety of interpretations her works encourage. It is this quality of Welty's fiction that Ruth Vande Kieft celebrates when she writes that

I was fortunate to come upon Eudora Welty's stories at a time when 'the text' was trusted and the writer trusted language, when signifier and signified were not divided, and the complexity of language was part of its interest and beauty, giving pleasure to interpretation. ("Visited and Revisited" 459)

Not only are Welty's works full of "suggestions," enabling such diversity of interpretation, but Welty is expansive in her willingness--even eagerness--to allow a wide range to the interpretations of her works; she is not rigidly possessive of her "intended meaning":

Even though [an interpretation] may not have been in the writer's mind, if something in the story suggests it, I think it's legitimate. You know, it doesn't have to be exact. . . . No, it doesn't bother me one bit if someone interprets something

in a different way, if I think the story can just as well suggest that as not, because you try to make it full of suggestions, not just one. (ConvW 335)

Two final images used by Welty to describe the process of writing beautifully reveal the value she places on keeping a text full and multiple. Not coincidentally, perhaps, both are images also associated with Virgie Rainey, who of all Welty's characters most completely expresses a multiplicity of identity. The first image is of the transparency and opacity a work must possess:

A work of art is a work: something made, which in the making follows an idea that comes out of human life and leads back into human life. . . . When it is finished, if it is good and sound, somehow all opacity has left it. . . . The fine physical thing has become a transparency through which the idea it was made to embody is thus made totally visible. It could not have been this visible before it was embodied. We see human thought and feeling best and clearest by seeing it through something solid that our hands have made. (Eye 58)

To Welty, a work of art is--must be--a complex of contradictions which does not seek reconciliation but delights in the possibility of being all: a text comes out of life yet returns to it; it is solid, yet also transparent; when transparent, it is most visible, yet it is most transparent when embodied. Ultimately, we see best through "something solid." The work is that solid yet transparent creation through which all of life can be seen or imagined.

In "The Wanderers," Virgie struggles with "a real hard plaid," loving the challenge of preserving the multi-directional lines, the complexity of the pattern, while shaping those lines, that pattern, into new forms, new creations. Welty uses the same sewing metaphor to describe the challenge of literary creation. The image is a particularly appropriate one for Welty, given that she revises her stories in the same way that a seamstress would lay out a pattern for a dress and cut out the pieces. "I revise with scissors and pins. . . . [W]ith pins you can move things from anywhere to anywhere, and that's what I really love doing--putting things in their best and proper place, revealing things at the time when they matter most" (ConvW 99).

Writing fiction has developed in me an abiding respect for the unknown in a human lifetime and a sense of where to look for the threads, how to follow, how to connect, find in the thick of the tangle what clear line persists. The strands are all there: to the memory nothing is ever really lost. (One Writer's Beginnings 98)

If Welty looks for a clear thread in the fabric of a story, still she does not separate it from "the thick of the tangle." It survives best where it can connect and be part of a pattern, not where it would be solitary and simply linear. The joy of creation, Welty implies, as well as the enjoyment in reading, is the awareness that "nothing is ever really lost," that all strands weave--even tangle--together

to create unforgettable stories and unforgettable characters.

Therefore, writing might best be thought of as the fabric of Welty's life, where multiple threads weave, tangle, and connect to create beautiful patterns and textures. Porter, when speaking of her writing, however, refers to it as a single "'steady and unbroken thread in my life'" (Conv. 159). More in keeping with the metaphor I use to describe Porter's conception of identity, Porter--and several of her interviewers--also referred to writing as the "core" of her existence (ConvP 70, 159, 183). Both images, however, suggest the function of writing to Porter: it gave her identity a singular, unfragmented coherence and continuity. Shirley Scott reaches a similar conclusion, claiming that writing, for Porter, "afforded a continuity of the self; the written work promised a duration of that which otherwise vanishes" (47). "The self against annihilation," Scott continues, "is not only her most compelling theme, but also her most compelling motive for writing" (48). For her characters as well as for herself, Porter imagined annihilation as a fragmentation, a disruption of identity's integration and order; writing was a means of establishing unity and coherence for her self and for her world. The most perfect texts to Porter thus are those that "[work] out of confusion into order. The material is all used so that you are going toward a goal. And that goal is the clearing

up of disorder and confusion and wrong, to a logical and human end" (ConvP 89). In fact, "the work of the artist," to Porter, is to create unity out of disorder.

Human life itself may be almost pure chaos, but the work of the artist--the only thing he's good for--is to take these handfuls of confusion and disparate things, things that seem to be irreconcilable, and put them together in a frame to give them some kind of shape and meaning. Even if it's only his view of a meaning. (ConvP 88)

Almost certainly this process was for Porter not only a creative purpose but a personal identity need as well. For, so intense was her need for "meaning" that she regarded it less her purpose to find meaning as it was to impose it, shaping her own meaning:

Literary art . . . is the business of setting human events to rights and giving them meanings that, in fact, they do not possess, or not obviously, or not the meanings the artist feels they should have. (qtd. in Brinkmeyer, "'Endless Remembering'" 10)

That meaning, however, is "true" if it accomplishes the goal of creating order and unity. Speaking of her story, "Noon Wine," Porter comments that it is "'true" in the way that a work of fiction should be true, created out of all the scattered particles of life I was able to absorb and combine and shape into new being" (ConvP 36). Given the fact that "Noon Wine" is based on a disturbing memory from Porter's actual past (Givner, Life 73-74) and involves a class of people from whom Porter strove to disassociate herself (77), ordering the story's "scattered particles"

quite possibly accomplished an ordering of Porter's own identity as well.

So strong was Porter's urge for order that Joan Givner chooses to emphasize this aspect at the close of her biography of Porter, singling it out as an essential motivating force for Porter.

[S]he never abandoned her battle to 'wangle the sprawling mess of . . . existence in this bloody world into some kind of shape.' It was a lonely, desperate battle, costly to herself and to the people she sacrificed in her determination to be somebody and to create something lasting, beautiful, and orderly. (Life 512)

Porter did indeed create something lasting and beautiful, and the beauty and timelessness of her texts largely derive from their order. Welty's works are equally stunning, but the beauty of her fiction is perhaps owing less to her orderliness than to the expansiveness of her art, the multiplicity of exchange contained in it. Ruth Vande Kieft describes Welty's art as a spectrum of words, colors freed from isolation and exposed to the light, transformed by their being mixed.

The words [are] not trapped in their several closed systems or contexts, so many pigment oils locked in their cool little tubes. Seized from a rich variety of vernacular and literary sources, the words, the colors, had already been squeezed out onto her artist's palette and put up there on her canvas, in the world [Vande Kieft's emphasis], the transformations wrought by her imagination for all to see. The light broke through, on them, from them. ("Visited and Revisited" 459)

Porter's is a different kind of painting, with a different use of colors. Quoting Matisse, Porter said,

"'You must be very careful to keep your colors on your palette separate and pure, put them side by side carefully; if you mix all the colors on your palette, you'll have mud'" (ConvP 103). For Porter, multiplying hues and tones was perhaps too large a risk, yet the carefully applied, pure spots of color she allows to every story have their own distinct vibrance, and are anything but mud. The portraits which emerge from each author's efforts are quite different, yet each is a perfect expression of its artist's identity.

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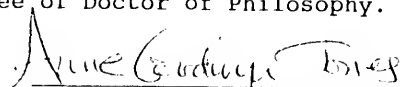
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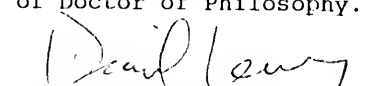
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Colleen Warren was raised in Rushville, Illinois. She attended Olivet Nazarene College in Kankakee, Illinois where she completed her undergraduate degree in 1981, graduating with a major in English education. After three years of high school teaching in Illinois and one year in Florida, she began her graduate work at the University of Florida, obtaining a master's degree in 1987 and completing her Ph.D. in 1992. She lives happily with her husband Jim and their two children: Kelsey, almost five, and Nathanael, twenty months.

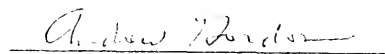
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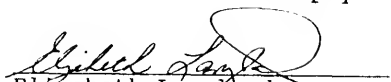
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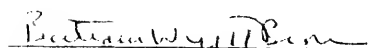
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This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of English in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

August, 1992

Dean, Graduate School

